

How to prepare for a 'straight to camera' video

A **straight to camera** video is one where you stand or sit in front of the camera and say your piece, and is more challenging than a **documentary style interview**, where you are answering questions from a seen or unseen interviewer. This guide aims to help you prepare successfully.

The main challenge is saying what you want to say clearly and concisely, without awkward pauses or mistakes. You can edit the video to remove those, but it is much better to make the best recording you can that will only require minimal editing.

Unless you are an experienced and confident public speaker, I recommend that you write a script. Write down what you want to say in your 'natural voice' – that means the same way you would say it if you were talking to someone. That will make it easier to remember and deliver to camera.

That said, your script will need to meet professional and academic expectations, so it should not be too informal, include slang, or (for example) include 'like' as punctuation between phrases.

You should not read your script to camera, but should instead learn it like an actor would.

- To do this you will need to **practice speaking it at the same volume you will use to camera**.
- Don't ever read it silently or quietly under your breath – say it out loud. A good trick is to say it to yourself in a mirror.
- Start by reading out loud from the script three or four times. Are there any parts that you trip over or that are awkward to say? If so, re-write the script to fix those problems and read it through again.
- Once you are happy with the script, try to learn the first paragraph. It is only a few words – you can do it! Practice saying it over and over and try not to refer to the script unless you have to.
- Once you are confident with that first paragraph, practice saying it and the following three or four paragraphs. You need to learn your script in convenient chunks.
- Pay particular attention to learning the start of each paragraph – you will find that once you start speaking, the rest of the paragraph will follow more easily. The more you practice, the more the words will 'drop into your mouth' and almost say themselves.
- Don't get stuck learning the first paragraph or chunk; move on and practice the next chunk or the rest of the script.
- It is difficult to learn an entire script in two or three long sessions, so you should aim for lots of short practices, ideally two or three 5-minute sessions a day for several days. Repetition builds confidence and confidence allows you to start working on your delivery.
- It is OK to say chunks of the script quietly under your breath as 'extra practice' once you have nearly memorised them. Struggling to recall the bits you have forgotten is a key part of the learning process.
- As you gain confidence with the script (what you say), start paying attention to your delivery (how you say it). Watch yourself in the mirror as you speak, and pretend that you are speaking TO that person. Slow down, add pauses and say the words like you mean them!
- You can also use your phone to video yourself and review that. Don't worry if you think it is bad, just delete the video and try again. You'll be surprised at how quickly you will improve.

Making practice videos that you delete after review will also help you get used to delivering to the unblinking eye of the camera. If you have a friend who can be behind the camera, even if that just means starting and stopping the recording, it can really help to deliver your speech to them. Just remember to look into the camera so you are talking directly to your audience – eye contact is essential!