



VIDEO INTERVIEW GUIDE

ABOUT:

This checklist is designed to help Texas A&M Forest Service personnel record high quality video interviews for agency initiatives and multimedia projects. It does not guarantee a video that meets agency standards, but is a helpful tool for personnel wanting to hone their videography skills.



VIDEO INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

- Set up the tripod so that the camera is eye-level with the person being interviewed
- Situate the camera and subject to generate “fall off” behind the person being interviewed (when the background is blurry) to help make them “pop”
 - Ensure there is space behind the subject
 - Zoom-in or move in and set the focus on the subject
 - On DSLR/mirrorless cameras, lower the aperture
- Level the camera so the horizon line is straight, and use the “rule of thirds” to position your subject in the frame
- Ensure that you are filming in 4k resolution if possible (on iPhones, this can be adjusted in your settings)
- AUDIO is just as important as video. Test the audio before recording to check for ambient noise and that you can clearly hear the subject. For quality audio:
 - Use a lapel microphone, AKA a “lav” mic
 - Attach a shotgun microphone to your camera
 - OR use an overhead boom microphone
- LIGHTING is also critical. Make sure there are no harsh shadows or lines on their face. Otherwise:
 - Use supplementary lights to balance the lighting
 - Use a white reflector to mitigate shadows outdoors

SITUATING YOUR SUBJECT:

While there is no cut-and-dry method for capturing an aesthetic interview, there are a few “cheats” you can use for setting up a consistent, balanced frame.

- Frame the subject from the waist or chest up. Zoom in if you're able to maintain video quality
- Turn the “grid” feature of your camera on. This divides the camera frame into thirds, so that you can properly align your subjects
 - If they are speaking to the camera, place them in the center of the frame, with their face on the upper line
 - If they are being interviewed, place them on the left or right line, slightly facing the opposite side
 - For interviews, have the interviewer sit beside the camera. Stand behind the camera for PSA/news video
- Make sure that the video record settings are appropriate (23.98fps and 1/50 shutter speed)
- Make sure that the subject is engaged and expressive
 - Avoid asking “yes or no” questions
 - Have the subject “repeat the question” in their answer
 - Engage with them as an interviewer, be an active listener, and make them feel comfortable



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