



## Preparations for Television Interviews

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Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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## Preparations for Television Interviews

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Preparing for TV interviews is especially crucial. With television, not only will your constituents be judging the answers you give to the reporter, but they will also be assessing your appearance. Unless you are careful, a television camera can be very unkind to an interviewee.

### **1. Pay attention to your clothing.**

On TV, mayors should look like mayors and council members should look like council members: professional. It is usually best to appear on camera in Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. Shirts and ties for the men, business dresses for the women. No baseball caps or T-shirts. TV cameras are not friendly to the color white or to patterned materials, so select solid color clothing if possible.

### **2. Pay attention to your grooming.**

Television lights tend to exaggerate certain facial features. For this reason, unless they are growing a beard, men should shave before appearing on TV. Shortly before the interview, check your hair in the mirror. If the interview is taking place right after lunch, use a mirror to check your teeth. Perspiration seems to show up well on TV cameras so have a handkerchief handy to dry your face prior to going on camera.

### **3. Pay attention to your body language.**

If you will be standing for your interview, practice talking with your arms relaxed at your side. If you will be seated, plan to sit upright with your hands in your lap or on the armrest of your chair. Avoid reclining. Never cross your arms in front of your chest (it looks defensive or combative). Unless the subject is gravely serious, try to smile.

### **4. Pay attention to the background.**

Especially if the interview is taking place on your turf, try to select a site that will improve your appearance. Avoid standing near a bare, light-colored wall, which might cause shadows that exaggerate the size of your head or your hair. Similarly, standing near or against a window is likely to put your face in an unflattering shadow. Good backdrops include flags, bookcases, flowers, and other nonreflective materials. In good weather, it may be advisable to conduct your interview outdoors, not in the direct light of the sun but under overcast skies or in shaded areas.

### **5. Pay attention to camera angles.**

In a TV studio, this is not usually something you will need to be concerned with. The studio crew will know how to set up the camera shots for your interview. Outside the studio, you'll want to pay attention to this important factor.

In the minutes before the interview, as the camera is being set up, try to assure that your face and the camera will be on the same level. Do not allow the camera to be placed higher than your face. You'll look small. Similarly, try to avoid having the camera placed so low that you'll look like a giant.

Camera angles that are "straight on" are usually not very flattering (again, think of your driver's license photo). If possible, try to position yourself at a slight angle to the camera (keeping your "best side" to the camera, of course).

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