

Movement

Depending on the kind of show you are presenting will depend on whether or not you are standing, sitting, lying on a bed, bouncing on a bungee cord or moving around.

In each scenario, different rules (if any at all) apply for different situations.

In order to be the best at what you do, however, you need to know the techniques.

Let's focus on the standing position.

When presenting to camera, prepare how you intend to stand in advance. You will usually be given a mark on the studio floor that looks like a big T. The centre leg of the T should be right in front of you with your toes just touching the crossbar.

When standing, the golden rule for looking confident and grounded, is to keep your lower half anchored to the floor, and let your top half do the talking. Even so much as the slightest wobble, leg sway or toe bounce, will indicate nerves, and your viewer will notice. And when the viewer notices, what they will *not* think is:

'Bless that poor presenter, so nervous standing in front of 100,000 people. I do feel for them.'

What the viewer will think is:

'The Presenter looks unsure of themselves, I'm not sure I trust anything they're saying.'

Viewers can be harsh, you've all heard the phrase, 'shouting at the telly.'

What viewers are looking for in a presenter is authority, commitment and dependability.

What they do not want to see is lack of control.

When I stand to present, I tend not to stand front on to the camera as this feels a little militaristic. Instead, I stand with one foot slightly forward, hips at a 30% angle, shoulders relaxed, and feet glued to the floor. It is, of course, not imperative when presenting that the presenter stays pinned to one place. Good stagecraft often depends on us walking over to address our audience either on one side of the stage or the other. When you do walk, it is imperative that you walk with purpose, no meandering or getting side-tracked halfway. Walk with purpose and when you arrive, immediately stop and anchor. Being completely still from our waist down puts us in a power stance, which instils the trust and confidence of the viewer.

Sometimes we are expected to present sitting down. For this, the same rules apply as for standing up. Keep the lower half of your body anchored while moving the upper part of your body. You want your back to be straight, no slouching, bottom to the back of the chair, slightly leaning forward.

From this position, keep still, avoid fidgeting. I tend to keep my legs crossed at the ankles, as any other kind of leg crossing can appear either overly formal or overly relaxed, or invariably, a messy combination of the two.

Eyes on the lens

When a presenter looks directly into the lens of the camera the effect for the viewer is that the presenter is looking into their eyes and that's generally where we look when we talk to people in 'real life' situations.

However, in real life there is a fine balance between too much eye contact and not enough. If someone avoids eye contact it can be distracting, it can make them look insecure or even a bit shifty and if they hold eye contact for more than ten seconds or so that can be unnerving too. But, it's different on camera, the audience doesn't get the feeling that you're staring at them, this intensity is lost through the TV/Video but they will still get the feeling that you're a bit shifty if you look away too much, they may also feel that there is something distracting you that's more interesting or there is something going on and the audience doesn't know what it is, because they can't see it.

So when presenting a straight to camera we need to keep our eyes on the lens and it's this that can feel, to us, very strange. When we talk to someone in real life we're reading their body language just as much as they are reading ours. Basically we're looking for their reactions to what we are saying, this is especially so when we've said something that we consider to be funny or amazing or in fact anything that should provoke a reaction. We want to see how, whatever it is we said, has gone down. Of course the camera isn't going to give you any feedback whatsoever, so our natural instincts are to look for a human face.

And there usually is someone there to look at like a floor manager, camera person or runner, But, resist the urge and keep your eyes on that lens, imagine that what you're saying is going down in the very best possible way, be presumptuous.

The general rule here is: keep your eyes on the lens unless the audience can see what you're looking at or know what you're looking at.

Talk to one person

How often do you watch the TV or a video with 35 other people? We generally watch TV and videos on our own or with 1 or 2 other people and this isn't enough to warrant a presenter addressing the camera as 'Ladies and Gentlemen'. If they do the feeling that the audience has of just having a chat can be lost, which isn't ideal but more of a concern is that the presenter themselves has it in their head that they are addressing a large number of people which encourages an 'On stage' style of performance which is too much for a TV in someone's living room.

So in your mind's eye imagine that you're talking to your best friend or someone you feel comfortable with.

Whenever I'm watching a new presenter I imagine a situation where I'm sitting in a coffee shop and they're just talking to me, if the way they're talking or the language they're using is a bit strange for my coffee shop scenario then we have to ask why are they doing it in front of the camera?

The exception to this rule is when there really is a live studio audience in front of you, of course you can address them as ladies and Gentlemen.

Carry on with a Smile

TV Presenting and communication in general is not an exact science, things are always going slightly astray from how we've planned them, but, it's not a mistake until the Presenter stops, looks uncomfortable and says sorry, the audience then know something's gone wrong. Presenters sometimes stop for the smallest thing that generally the audience hasn't even noticed but in the presenters head it's a big mistake, even if the audience do notice a little fumble or stutter they generally won't mind as long as the presenter doesn't mind either. If the presenter looks awkward or uncomfortable it can be awkward and uncomfortable for the audience too.

Another reason to continue is that you never know what the director has in mind or what the editor can do in post-production, if you keep going you leave them with options if you stop you don't, on live TV you have no choice but to carry on.

So get into the habit of not stopping, even if you stumble, just brush it off with a smile, if it doesn't bother you then it won't bother the audience either, if you make a big thing of it and feel awkward or self-conscious then your audience feel uncomfortable for you.

The general rule is if you are going to comment on something that's gone wrong then, if anything, be self-deprecating, never point the finger or allocate blame to someone else, you'll end up looking like a diva.

If something major has happened your Director would stop the shoot if it's a pre record or on live TV you would address it in the lightest possible way and correct yourself and then carry on as if nothing happened.

