

Teleprompter Tips by Naomi Bell of Q Prompting

Using a Teleprompter

Using a teleprompter is easy. Look at the monitor and read at your own pace. Imagine someone from your audience is on the other side of the prompter; this will help you feel like you are talking to a person and not reading a script.

Remember that you are in absolute control of the speed of the scrolling text. Your words will never leave the screen before you are done with them. If you pause for a breath, the operator pauses. If you speed up, the operator speeds up. If you adlib, the operator will stop scrolling until you return to your prepared script.

Use the fact that you have your text in front of you to your advantage. Ask for words to be underlined or bold. If needed, have words spelled "FUH-neh-tik-lee." Where appropriate, comments like [PAUSE] or [SMILE] can be inserted into the script.

Before the Shoot

The more familiar with your script you are, the more natural you will sound when speaking to camera.

It's not always possible, but if you do have your script ahead of time you should read it – out loud – at least twice before the shoot. This allows you to get used to the sound of your voice and become familiar with the content. Practice gesturing and changing your facial expressions as you read. Use variety in your tone. Don't be afraid to pause, move your eyes, head, shoulders and hands.

As you read over your script, divide the sentences into segments, taking a beat at natural resting spots. It is especially important to pause just before an idea to which you wish to draw attention.

You don't need to memorize, but you should be comfortable and familiar with the flow and content of your speech. Rehearsing will help you deliver, not read, your script.

"Action!"

Once you hear "Action", pause, relax and then look directly at (and through) the prompter mirror. Smile if appropriate. Wait a second or two and then start reading your lines at the pace the director has indicated.

Try to keep your head, body and arms as natural as possible within the parameters set by your director or producer. If possible, try to move as you would if you were giving this information to a group of colleagues or friends.

Don't be afraid to pause. Remember to breathe. It's usually okay to smile. And blinking never hurt anybody. Remember, from the audience's point of view, you aren't reading – you're speaking directly to them. Most important: you're telling them something they want or need to hear.

There's plenty of videotape for extra takes if you do stumble. Don't worry, just think about how much time you're saving since you don't have to try and recite memorized lines.

Remember to continue eye contact with the camera for about 5 seconds after you hear "Cut!" This allows smooth transitions in editing.

Have a great shoot!

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