**Being an effective anchor**

You are in the viewer’s living room. SPEAK to them, do not read to them.

Talk to one person. Television is on to one medium. Don’t think of ‘the audience’ as a group; think of it as a collection of individuals. Visualize yourself speaking to your mother. She wants it clear, conversational and informal. Our audience is simply made up of millions of individual mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers.

Look interested and energetic. There is a natural tendency to be stiff and formal. It’s a form of “personal protection” so that you don’t look foolish and make a mistake. The tendency is to appear and act reserved. This is a mistake. If you aren’t interested in telling viewers stories and also look and sound interested, they won’t interested in hearing or seeing the stories.

You must be relaxed, conversational and more expressive then you would be in normal communication with, say, friends. You are a three-dimensional person, but the audience sees you on a two-dimensional screen. You must be a bit larger than life to bring that third dimension back and come out ‘naturally’ on the screen. The general rule is one third more emphasis/body language/expression then you would use in normal conversation. It will feel a bit goofy. It will look fine.

Sit on the front edge of the anchor chair. It will force you to lean a bit forward. A body language rule is that if a person wants someone else’s attention, he or she will learn into them or move closer to them. Standing is even better for natural body language.

When you turn from camera to camera, do not look from one camera directly to the other. Your eyes will “hunt for” the second camera before settling on it. Look down at the desk, turn on your bum (to make sure your shoulders are square to the second camera), then come up from the desk to it. Your eyes will not hunt if you come up instead for going from left to right.

Don’t “peek” or look off camera. Check whether or not you’re on the air on a monitor within your peripheral vision. TV news “catches the edges”/ the audience will see you looking off just as you come on and wonder what you’re looking at.

Smile on greeting and bumps. A “greeting” is just that… you are welcoming the viewer to our newscast. No one wants to invite a grouch into their living room, they want someone pleasant even if they are going to deliver some bad news. And this means a real smile, not a phony, forced one.

Use infections and expression that match the story. For instance, you don’t want to be smiling when you tell viewers about a dozen people killed in a bus accident and you don’t want to be frowning when you’re talking about a group of children winning an award.

Use body language. Do not just speak words…. Inflect them with your body. We’re engaged in visual and auditory communication. Body language is another tool. Use it. It won’t hurt if the audience sees your hands or head move and you’ll be much more expressive.

When you move, try to do it forward and backward, not side to side. You will often be farmed with graphics. If you move side to side, you will move ‘out of center’ and the screen placement will be disproportional.

Read over the copy you are going to deliver several times before going on the air. You should be familiar with it so you are comfortable delivering it. (Make sure you check pronunciation, so you don’t have to guess on the air. Nothing destroys newscast credibility quicker than an incorrect pronunciation of well-known name). Do not read the copy ten or fifteen times before you go on the air. Reading it dozen times will not make you more comfortable. Your mind will tell you you’ve already read the information repeatedly, so when you deliver it on the air, it will sound like rote reading and will sound boring.

Don’t just “read copy”. Come in a bit earlier and get familiar with the stories you’re reading so you actually know something about them. That confidence will come out in your presentation. When you read over copy before going on the air, mark inflections or pauses in your own coding. Your marks won’t be copy on the teleprompter, but your mind will remember where they are and the inflections you intended will come out in your presentation.

Look down at the script on the desk in between stories, to show the audience where one story ends and another begins. Make sure you make eye contact with the written script in from of you or will look contrived. Another body language cue. If you are co-anchoring and the next story is being read by the co-anchor, look at him or her instead looking down. Your body language will ‘lead’ the audience to the other anchor.

You should follow the teleprompter with the scripts on your desk. You do not have to know exactly what word you’re reading in the script-but you should know what third of the page you’re on, in case the teleprompter quits accidentally. Do not turn the page on the anchor desk over onto a neat pile. Slide them off the desk. If you turn them you will invariably bring them into the shot, distracting the viewer.

Try never to run to the studio. You not only have to be control on the air, you have to look like you are in control. Out-of-breath people do not look in control.

Showing feelings is appropriate. If six children have been accidentally killed, anyone telling another person about would be affected. Blandly reading a story like that make you look stoic and cold. This should not be extended to editorializing on issues via voice, inflection or body language, however.

The two most important factors in presentation are tonality and pacing. You should come up in tone in the lead of a story (always trying to get the audience’s attention) and your tone should come down at the end of a story, signaling the audience that it is the end. You should always vary pacing (the rate at which you read a story) in a story, sometimes varying the pace of different parts of one sentence in a story. If you read all stories at the same pace it will be repetitive and boring. Variety and surprise are two of the keys to holding audience interest.

Stress only important words in the story. This will highlight the words you want the audience to pay attention to. For instance, you might want to say: “Forty five people were killed. One hundred more were injured.” The important thing in this story is that a lot of people were killed. We want to convey that important to the audience with our vocal presentation.

The important thing is to stay focused on the audience. What will they get out of the story? What do you want them to pay attention to? What will they understand? If you always keep them in mind and just TALK to them, you’ll be a fine anchor.