

How to look good on television

The well-dressed guest's guide

What to wear:

Comfort: It's important that you're not thinking about your clothing when you're on the set, so wear clothes that you're comfortable in. It can get hot under the studio lights, so you might consider wearing layers that you can remove if you need to.

Color:

- White, black, bright reds – problems.
- Medium tones – good.

Whites will make everything else in the picture (including dark-complexioned people) look very dark. Black clothes will make pale people wash out. Bright red tends to bleed. The best colors to wear are grays and dark pastels.

Patterns: Tweeds, small stripes and other busy patterns will create distracting ripples on the screen. Plain colors or very large patterns without a lot of fine detail are best.

Don't take your glasses off if you need them: Many people worry that their glasses will glare on television, but you'll look much better if you aren't squinting! As long as you don't look directly into the lights, you'll be fine.

Accessories: The noise made by jangly jewelry will get picked up by the microphones. Large, metallic jewelry may throw distracting reflections of the lights.

We have some extra blazers and sweaters that guests can borrow to cover problematic clothing.

What to bring:

Notes: If you're going to have notes on-screen, the best colors to use are gray, pink or blue paper with a non-shiny finish – white tends to bloom and make everything look dark in comparison. We have colored paper and cards you can use.

Objects and artwork: There's a copy stand with an overhead camera right next to the host position for flat artwork. We also have an easel for larger pieces and can place 3D objects on the desks. However, we can't tape anything to the front of the desk.

Please don't laminate artwork and avoid glossy paper: It causes glare. Frequently-used graphics can be mounted on poster board to make them more durable and slipped into an envelope to protect them when they're not being used.

Graphics text: Avoid small or italicized fonts - use very bold fonts like Arial Black. Don't put more than about 20 characters on a line, remember that TV is 'landscape' orientation and leave plenty of room on the margin:

Videotapes: We can play tapes during your show. They need to be recorded on VHS or SVHS tapes in the 'Standard Play' (two-hour) speed. They should be cued to where you'd like them to start playing. If you'd like to play more than one tape, please remember that we need time to change the tapes in the player.

We can also play DVDs! This will give you the highest-quality playback of your material.

Let us know if you want us to leave your microphone open during playback so you can make comments while the tape plays.

What we need:

Come on time! You should be here at least ten minutes before the show is scheduled to start. If you aren't here by five minutes before show start (which is when the previous show usually ends and we expect you to begin taking your places) we'll assume you aren't coming and start setting up for the next show.

Guest names, titles and affiliations: We can also make special subtitles with useful information for the audience, such as phone numbers and web addresses that you want the audience to know about: Just write it all out on the tech sheet or another piece of paper so we don't make any mistakes.

Warn us of special requirements: We have a separate area where people can perform standing up, but we need to know ahead of time so we can light it appropriately, get microphones, etc.

Turn cell phones and beepers off!

How to behave:

Look at the camera: Think of it as a silent third person in your conversation. Smile and nod at it from time to time as a way of acknowledging the viewers. This is especially important when someone calls in: You'll hear the caller coming from a speaker on your right side and your natural inclination will be to look towards the sound. But the viewers won't understand why you're looking away from them. The red light on top indicates which camera is on so you can look directly at the caller.

And please remember...

The most flattering accessories – for man, woman and child alike – are good humor and an easy smile...