



TRADE SECRETS

Record great audio

Looking to record great audio and get compelling sound clips? We've asked experts at CNN, from sound technicians to radio correspondents, for their thoughts. Some of their top audio tips follow.

A stick microphone is an important investment

Portable recorders will definitely require that you use a microphone for the best possible sound. A good general investment is an omnidirectional microphone, which picks up sounds from all directions.

Pay attention to how you hold the microphone

Hold the microphone firmly and steadily at its base. Position it four to six inches away from the interviewee's mouth – but the louder the surroundings, the closer you should hold it.

If you've got a long interview, your arm will probably start to tire – but no worries. Simply ask your subject to pause for a moment and switch to the other arm. And always handle the microphone yourself.

Always wear headphones when you're recording

You may unconsciously filter out background noise when you're recording audio, but a microphone is very unforgiving. It will pick up rustles, faraway traffic, wind – so always wear headphones to make sure you're noticing exactly what your microphone is picking up.

Block sound if possible

You'd be surprised how much external sound can be picked up by recording devices. So be creative when recording audio and use whatever you can think of to block sound, such as your body, a wall or a windscreen. If there's noise or wind, stand in front of the interviewee to block it. And if you're outside and the noise is simply too loud to block, a car can make a handy interviewing space.

Shut up when shooting

Audio equipment can be super-sensitive, so keep quiet and keep down the noise of others working with you. You may want to laugh, cough or "mmm-hmm" your assent to your subject, but resist the urge.

Get compelling and clear clips via editing

The cut is the key to helping you tell the story with the newsmaker or a witness of an event. It must be newsworthy, it must be brief and it must be compelling. You don't want to use a cut that says what you say. For example, you don't want to say, "The governor says his new budget does not include taxes," and then play a cut of the governor saying, "There are no new taxes in my new budget." You want to set up the audio: "The governor says there is no reason to penalize the people for the overspending of their elected leaders." Then play the cut from the governor: "There will be no new taxes in my new budget."



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