

Getting Better On Camera

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You don't have to be AFRAID of being in front of the camera. Get better with tips from video experts.



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What should I do with my arms and hands?

Most people don't know what to do with their hands and arms once they get in front of the camera. You might feel like these appendages that have been there your whole life suddenly feel awkward and out of place.

So what should you do with your arms and hands?

First, and foremost, be yourself. If you naturally talk with your hands, you probably won't stop. Instead, make sure you control the size and speed of your movements. Unlike the open space you have when you present in front of a live audience, the camera the camera captures a fixed frame. Adjust the size of your movements, so your hands and arms aren't moving in and out of the frame too often. You'll also want to be mindful about the speed of your movements. Rapid movement may be distracting to your viewers and, ultimately, take away from the message you are conveying.

Use your hands with purpose. For instance, if you're talking about something small, you could use your hands to indicate something is large, or bring your thumb and forefinger together to indicate a small size. Or if you are talking about three points, hold up three fingers to provide a visualization to go along with your message. These expressive hand gestures can help add variety and context to what you are speaking about.

As you start determining what gestures to make, or how to move your hands and arms, avoid making the same gestures and movements over and over.



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand reaching upwards, palm facing forward, against a light blue background. The hand is the central focus, with fingers slightly spread. The lighting is soft and even.

Brian Fanzo

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"I talk with my hands.

I used to have two sticky notes. [They] would say, 'Stop talking with your hands and slow down.' And when I realized, when I stopped talking with my hands I slowed down, I became someone I was not. So after doing many, many videos, those two sticky notes just went away. And instead, I realized that the more I am myself, the higher the quality of the videos."

Use your hands with purpose

Holding Items In Your Hands

If you go searching for advice about what to do with your hands while on-camera or when presenting you may find a variety of suggestions about whether you should hold something while speaking. The answer to this depends on you. You may find holding something to be comforting and provide a little security. If that's the case, feel free to hold something small.

When holding an item, like a pen or marker, make sure it doesn't become a distraction to your audience. The biggest thing is that IF you hold something, don't fidget with it. Don't click or spin the pen. Hold the object lightly and integrate it into your other movements as you speak. If you're the type of person who will fidget, spin, or otherwise play with what you're holding, you may want to avoid having something in your hands when presenting.

Keep Your Gestures Open

As you present, keep your body language open. There are several ways you can do this. One is by showing your palms as you gesture. It signals to the viewers it's safe to listen to you. At times during your presentation, you can also keep your shoulders and arms turned out a bit to keep your body open to the camera. Avoid crossing or folding your arms as you speak. This will put a barrier between you and your viewers, and potentially signal negativity or insecurity.

What Not To Do

Inevitably there are best practices around what to do with your hands as you present. You might find other guidelines that work for you, but here are few suggestions to help you on your way.

1. Keep your hands out of your pockets. It will tend to look a bit sloppy on camera, and won't help your audience to have confidence in what you're saying.
2. Don't wring or cup your hands. These actions will come across as nervous and be distracting to the viewer.
3. Don't point. It can be off-putting to the audience. If you need to draw attention to something, look for other gestures to accomplish your goal.

The Last Resort

If you're still not sure what to do with your hand there is a safe fallback. When you are unsure, drop your arms and hands to your side for a moment. This motion can be a reset, and allow you to re-center how you're using movement and gestures. It may feel awkward, but remember, you only have to keep them there for a few seconds.

Prep Yourself to Go On Camera

~ Smile.... It makes a difference.

"Anything, you can do to get them laughing, smiling, before they're getting on camera, you know, goes a long way, right? And, I do it myself when I'm turning on the camera, even to just record a video message or something. I make sure before I hit record ... I've got a smile on my face.

I might think of something funny my kids did that morning, or I'll ask somebody to tell me a joke. And, even if it's not funny, I'll force myself to laugh at it. Just something, so when you hit play, you're smiling and you've got positive energy going into it. It makes such a difference."



Tyler Lessard, Vice President of Marketing, VidYard

Practice A Lot, and Keep Getting Better

~ You have to have a lot of takes so you can get comfortable on camera.

"Evan Carmichael is one of my friends, he's got over a million subscribers, he's really good. I'm an old guy, [who skateboards] and I'm stubborn and I've always not been the best deliverer on camera. He asked me one day, 'How many takes do you do?' I'm like, 'I do one take, maybe two, if I mess up.' And I'm just not that natural on camera.

And he just looked at me, like, 'Okay. How many times did it take you to learn how to ollie?' I was like, 'probably 10,000-ish, maybe?' And then he's like, '37.' And I was, like, 'What are you talking about?' So for a month he made me take 37 takes every time I shot anything."



Jeremy Vest, Senior Evangelist, vidIQ

Getting Over Your Fears of Being on Camera

Q. I get in front of the camera and immediately feel uncomfortable. What can I do to overcome my fears?

A. Andrew Kan says, "It's not natural to be in front of a camera. I often have to remind people that, but it is a choice you make." It's okay to feel nervous or uncomfortable in front of the camera. Being okay with that is the first step.

Whether you're weeks or minutes away from being on camera, there are other things you can do to help you have the confidence you need to do a good job. If you haven't already, take the time to familiarize yourself with the content. This may mean memorizing it or being able to speak about it off the cuff without needing lots of notes. Knowing your material will make talking to the camera a lot easier.

Once you have your content down, or in the process of getting it, you should practice in front of a camera. Practice talking to the lens, and talking with no one there. Record at least some of these sessions and review them. What nervous ticks do you have? Where do you struggle? What went well that you can build off of? You may want to ask someone else to review your practice and point out any areas of improvement. This can be difficult and may feel overwhelming, but it is one of the best ways to improve.



"It's not natural to be in front of the camera."



Overcoming Your Fears

Before you step in front of the lens, take a minute to calm yourself, maybe focus on your breathing, and even meditate. Calming your mind can help you focus, and feel more confident. If you have a script, outline, or another source of content, take a few minutes to review it again.

Nick Nimmin suggests to "loosen up before you go on camera. Speak louder than you normally would. And the reason is because typically the energy that the camera takes away from you, it's like, you lose a little bit. So if you amp it up just a little bit, then you're gonna be able to compensate for that. And in the process of doing that, you're also kind of charging yourself up."

Three things you can do to increase your presence on camera:

1. Speak a little louder.
2. Stand or sit up straight, and try not to slouch.
3. Increase your energy level by speaking with your hands, being excited about your topic, and generally be a bit more than your everyday self.



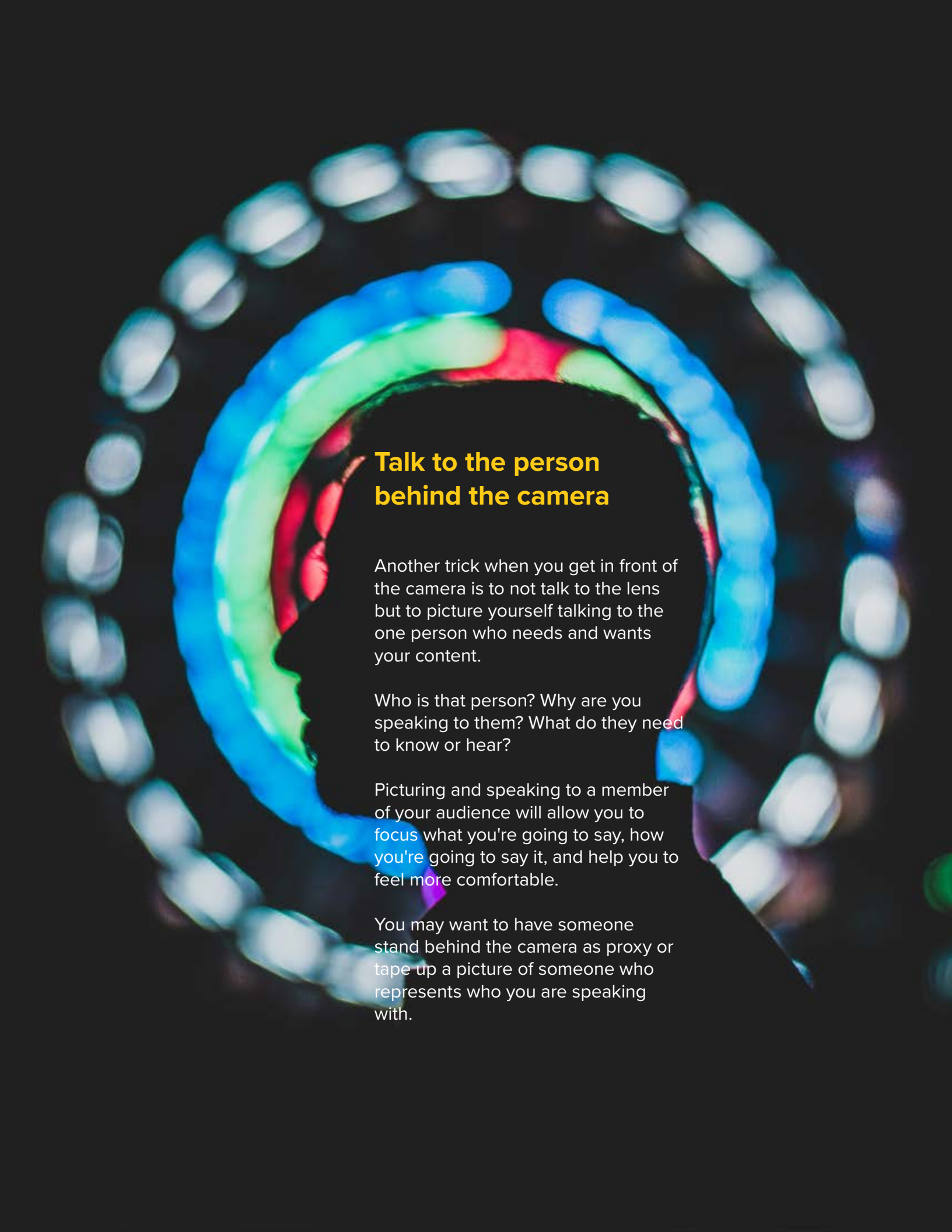
A person is shown from the chest up, lying down in a dark environment. Their hands are pressed against their eyes, completely obscuring them. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of their skin and the contours of their hands. The overall mood is one of vulnerability or fear.

Sean Cannell

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"The fear may never go away, but you can move forward in spite of the fear.

What I've learned is you've just got to own it. You know, be you. Be you times two. Be bold, because what other way is there to be? I think that, a lot of times, people get on camera and they apologize. Don't apologize.



Talk to the person behind the camera

Another trick when you get in front of the camera is to not talk to the lens but to picture yourself talking to the one person who needs and wants your content.

Who is that person? Why are you speaking to them? What do they need to know or hear?

Picturing and speaking to a member of your audience will allow you to focus what you're going to say, how you're going to say it, and help you to feel more comfortable.

You may want to have someone stand behind the camera as proxy or tape up a picture of someone who represents who you are speaking with.

Stay Focused on Your Core Audience

~Talk to a specific person, not just a generalized or group of people

"...It's gotten easier for me because I'm looking at somebody, and I know who they are, and I think about them, and think about what they go through, and I think about their questions and the last comments that they left me. And, when I'm thinking about that one person, it makes it so much easier.

So, that part gets easier for those who are starting and really getting into the flow of it. But, it can be thrown off if you don't keep the mindset on that individual. It's much more frequent for someone who's starting to [say], 'Oh my God, is my mom going to watch this? My best friend's never going to understand. And, my boss might find this.' I know this doesn't make sense from a business standpoint, but we ... think, 'Is someone going to watch this and think I look ridiculous?'

... At the end of the day, if Charlotte, who I'm speaking to, loves what I'm doing, continues to come back, buys my product, buys my book, whatever, then I've done my job."



Amy Landino, Founder, Aftermarq

What Should I Wear On Camera?

What you wear on camera is an important consideration and can help you have the confidence you want and need. In addition, there are practical reasons to make sure your wardrobe choices are in line with what works well on camera.

What you wear on camera is relatively subjective, and can vary depending on who your audience is and your goals. If you know you're going to be nervous on camera, think about what is going to make you feel brave, confident, and will allow you to project your best self. Maybe it's a particular jacket or blouse? Perhaps you have a certain vibe you want to convey, and that awesome company t-shirt speaks volumes about who you and your organization are. Remember, dress in a way that will be received well by your audience and fit your message.

Patterns

In addition to thinking about the message you'll send with your clothes, you'll want to consider how that shirt, jacket, scarf, or anything else will work on camera. Clothing with tight patterns, typically need to be avoided. Tight-patterned clothing can create an optical illusion effect, called the moiré pattern. Moiré will appear in the camera footage as wavy lines or lines that look like they are moving. This can be distracting to the viewer and should be avoided, if possible.

Dressing for Your Microphone

If you are going to be using a lavalier or lapel microphone, you may want to wear clothing that the mic can easily be clipped to, like a shirt or blouse with buttons or a jacket.

Clothing Color

Another consideration is the color of the clothes you are going to wear. There isn't a hard rule about wearing certain colors, but some colors look and work better on camera. For instance, you may want to avoid white and black shirts. Our friends at Wistia [wrote a great article discussing which colors you might want to consider](#), as well as some practical tips for dressing for on-camera success.

Whether you're wearing your favorite power tie, a fashionable scarf, or jeans and a cool t-shirt, dress for the message you want to send and in a way that will keep you comfortable and feeling confident as you present your message.

Learn more about the moiré Pattern [here](#).

Jewelry

One consideration before going in front of the camera is thinking about any jewelry you might choose to wear. Avoid wearing jewelry that is flashy or that will dangle. You don't want your accessories creating extra noise, or otherwise getting in the way of a perfect take.



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AKEUP & POWDER

Use makeup as you usually do, or use powder or rice paper to remove any shine.

Regular makeup-wearers: If you usually wear makeup, touch up your makeup prior to starting your recording. Use powder to remove any shine amplified by the the lights. Consider using your shade or one shade darker. Focus on the forehead, nose, and chin.

Non-makeup-wearers: Ideally, you should use a bit of powder, too. But if you don't have any, or don't feel comfortable, you should use rice paper. Rice paper will reduce shine from your forehead, nose, chin, etc.

Bald men should consider using rice paper to help reduce shine from the top of their heads.



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RINK WATER

Keep your vocal cords well-hydrated to provide the best possible performance.

Since you want to be your best on camera, you need to take care of the tools that will help you perform at your best. One way to do this is to drink water at room temperature. Cold water will tighten your vocal cords and larynx. You should also avoid coffee, tea, dairy, and soda a few hours before recording.

In addition to drinking water, you may want to avoid eating a heavy meal close to recording time. A dense, full meal, can restrict your diaphragm, and constrain your breathing space. If you do need to eat, focus on foods that are lighter, such as fruits or a handful of nuts.

Keeping yourself hydrated during recording, will not only make you feel better but help you be ready to do and sound your best during recording.

PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS

One of the things we heard over and over during our interviews at Video Marketing World was the need for consistency and to actively keep creating new content. If you want to get better on camera, you have to be in front of the camera - a lot.

Challenge

- Make at least five videos in the next two weeks.
- Re-watch each video, then pick one thing to do better or work on in the next video.
- Share at least one video with a trusted colleague, and ask for feedback on your performance.
- Share one of the videos publicly, or within your organization.

ON CAMERA CHECK LIST

Before you go on Camera, run through a quick checklist to help you make sure you're ready.

Before Recording:

- Wearing solid colors or large-patterned clothes (without a tight pattern).
- Wear colors appropriate for what you are recording (don't wear green if recording against a green screen).
- Wear clothes to facilitate microphone placement.
- Check your teeth, hair, and make-up.
- Drink water and stay hydrated.
- Avoid sugar.
- Know your audience and who you are speaking to.
- Ask where you are to look, whether into the camera directly, or never into the camera.

During Recording:

- Arrive early and prepared.
- Turn off your cell phone or put it into airplane mode.
- Adjust your volume to the appropriate level.
- Adjust your energy level and performance to make sure you and your topic come across well on camera. Be energetic!
- Use your hands with purpose as you speak.
- Adjust your body language to send the appropriate message to your audience (typically open).
- If sitting, sit up and don't slouch.
- If standing, don't rock or sway. If standing for a long time, it's okay to shift your weight, but do so subtly.
- Do not put your hands in your pockets.