

# How to do TV interviews

Your path to glory and international fame

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PPHS-614 - McGill University  
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# Disclosures



# Objectives for today

Part 1: The mechanics of doing a TV interview

Part 2: Workshop where I interview each of you (time permitting) and your peers criticise you for your shortcomings

# What do we mean by TV?

TV interview for the news or TV show

Podcast with video

Webseries

Interview across multiple platforms

More accurate term is interview with video



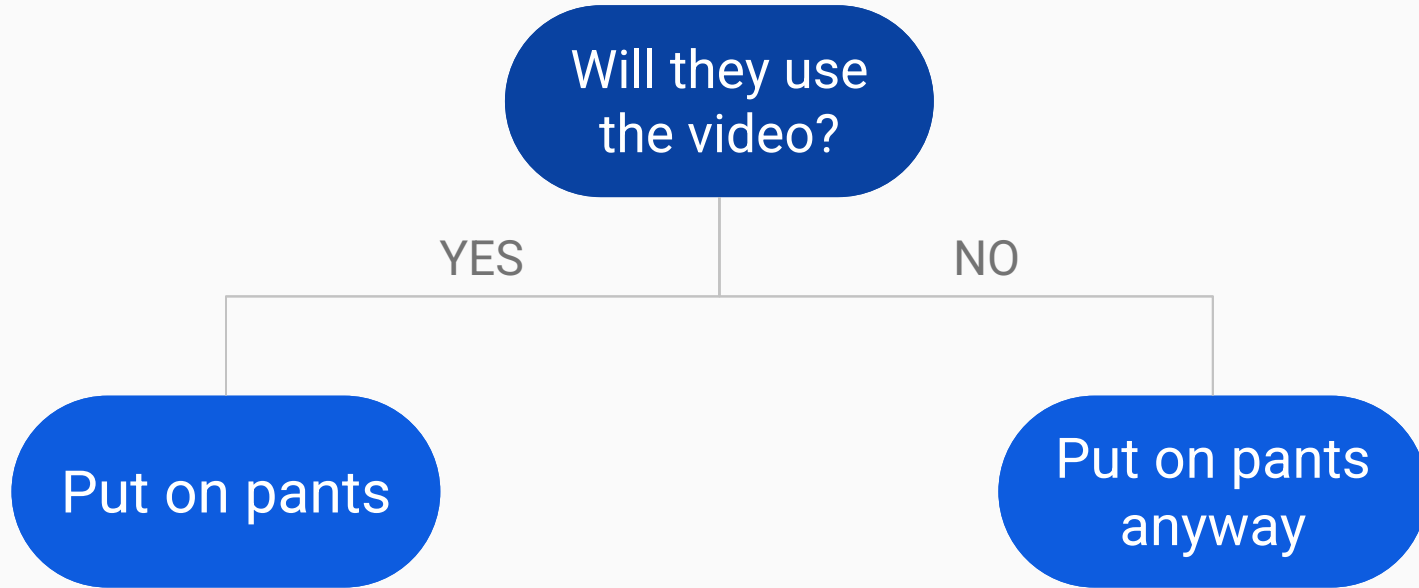
## Expert debunks some of Aaron Rodgers's COVID-19 claims

3 months ago | News | 2:08

'Virtually all of what he said [about COVID-19] was untrue,' says Dr. Christopher Labos, a Canadian cardiologist with a degree in epidemiology, referring to Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers's comments about the disease on Nov. 5. (Ross D. Franklin/The Associated Press)

# First question to ask

“Will you use this video?”





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HINKLi9h3g>

# The visuals: lighting

Almost nothing is as important as lighting for video interviews

Don't live in the shadows



# Pre-covid

In-studio interviews

Camera crew comes to you

Largely absolves you of responsibility

Not an accident most interviews done outdoors



# Post-covid (a.k.a the era of indifference)

More likely to do via Skype/Zoom/FaceTime/GoogleMeets etc.

Lighting/sound/position is on you

🔊 TAP TO UNMUTE

### 94th Judicial District Court

Recording of this hearing or live stream is prohibited.

Violation may constitute contempt of court and result in a fine of up to \$500 and a jail term of up to 180 days.

394th Judicial District Court



Get more news **LIVE** on  NBC NEWS NOW. >

# Lighting

Arguably the most important aspect of what we are going to talk about

Light = good

Darkness = bad

# Lighting

Best light source = sun

Face a window

No lamp can outperform the sun

In studio, there are massive light sources for a reason







# Lighting

Best light source = sun

One downside

Beware the glare



# Lighting - problems

Trees blocking light

Vertical blinds

Reflections off windows across the street

Direct sunlight in the afternoon

Be prepared to draw curtains and turn on lamps

# Lighting

## Alternatives to the sun

- **Symmetrical lighting = two lamps on either side of you at a slight angle**
- Goal is to illuminate your face
- Light should be in front of you, not behind you
- Light should mimic what the sun would do







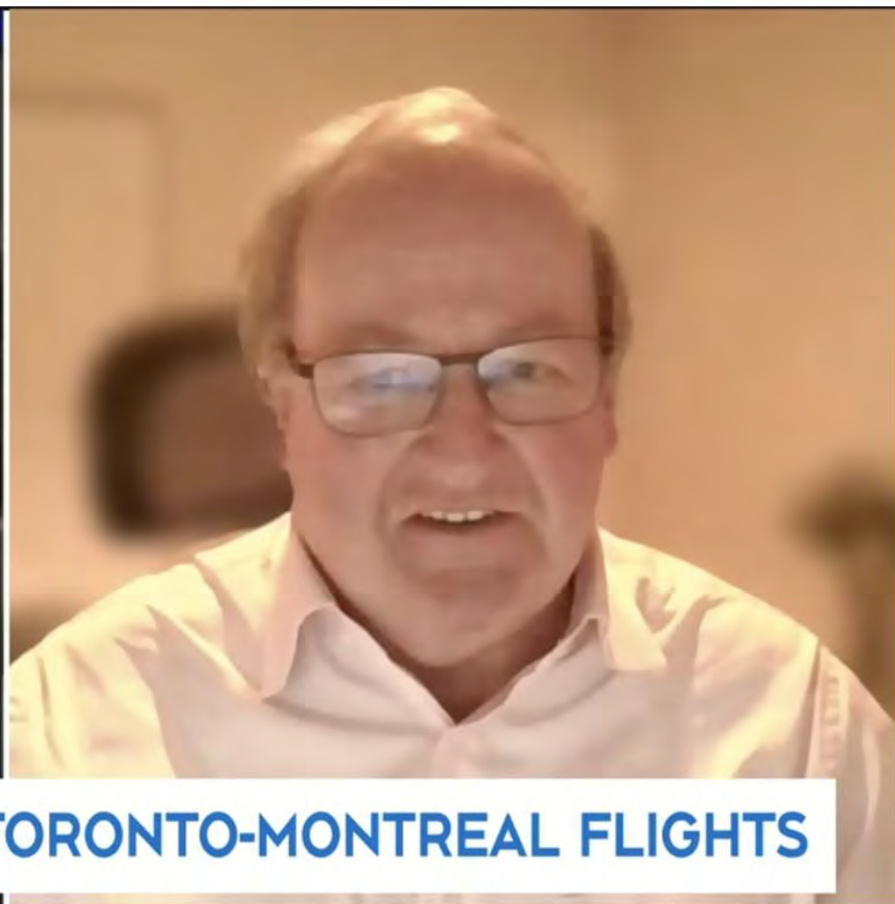
A new survey of U.S. employees reveals that workers are more dissatisfied now in their jobs than they were during the pa...



Play

Global 



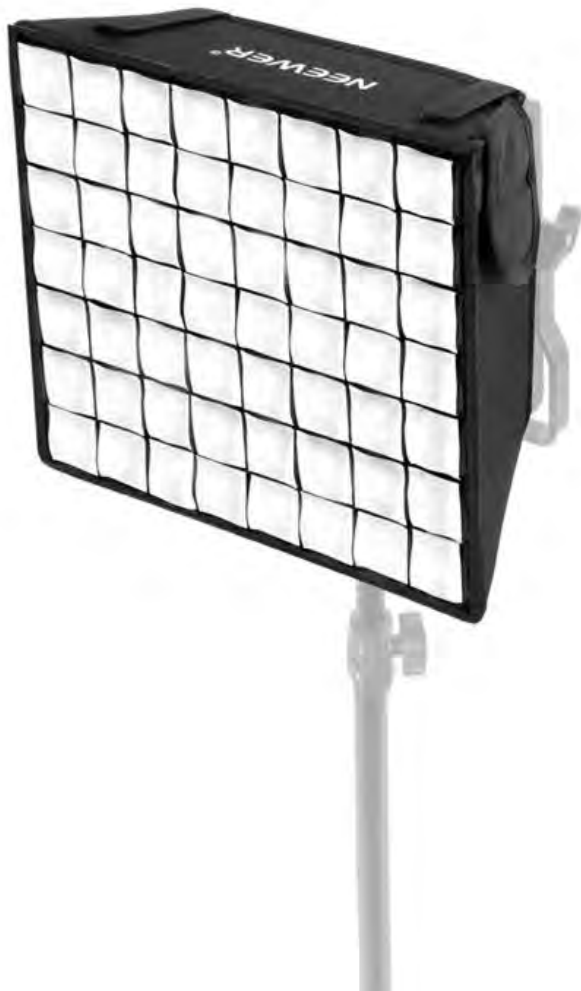


**WESTJET SUSPENDS TORONTO-MONTREAL FLIGHTS**

# Lighting

## Alternatives to the sun

- You can buy professional light sources if you want and were born into institutional wealth





# Lighting

Do you need a ring light?

Short answer: no

Longer answer: it depends

Electronics › Cell Phones & Accessories › Accessories › Photo & Video Accessories › Flashes & Selfie Lights › Selfie Lights



VIDEO



Roll over image to zoom in



## Sensyne 12" Ring Light with Tripod Stand, LED Selfie Ring Light with Stand and Phone Holder for Photography/Recording/YouTube/TikTok, Compatible with All Cell Phones/Cameras

Brand: SENSYNE

4.1 ★★★★★ 2,297 ratings

#1 Best Seller in Cell Phone Selfie Lights

2K+ bought in past month

-14% \$42<sup>99</sup>

List Price: \$49.99

**Coupon:**  Apply \$3 coupon [Shop items >](#) | [Terms](#)

Get up to **5% back** at Amazon.ca and grocery stores for 6 months upon approval for the **Amazon.ca Rewards Mastercard**.

Brand	SENSYNE
Connectivity technology	USB
Hardware interface	Bluetooth, USB
Has self-timer	No

# Lighting - ring light

## Pros:

- Illuminates your face - which is what matters
- fairly inexpensive
- Fairly portable - positionable anywhere
- Plugs into USB slot or outlet
- Gives a “round” source of light (not a pinpoint)
- It can travel with you (if you need that sort of thing)
- Fairly sturdy







# Lighting - ring light

## Cons:

- Mainly designed for YouTubers
- Main purpose is for a light source that surrounds your phone
- Can cause weird halos if you were glasses
- No meaningful advantage over regular lamp if doing interview on your computer
- Still need ambient light for your room

# Lighting

Ambient light for the room

Largely accomplished by sunlight

If night or no windows need a third slight source for background

Should not be in camera shot or directly above you





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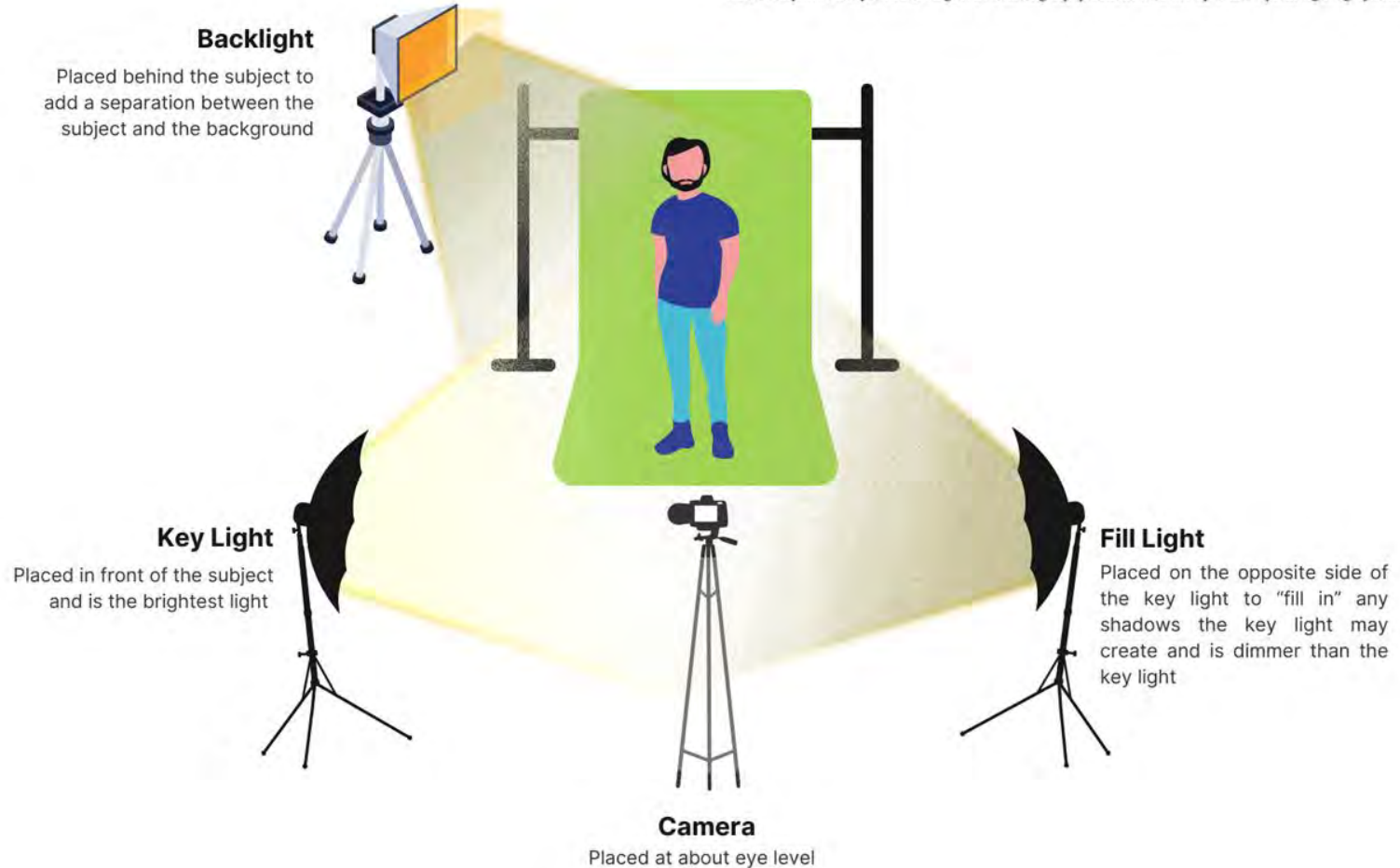
Avoid office fluorescent lighting





# Three-Point Lighting System

Source: <https://streamyard.com/blog/live-streaming-equipment/how-to-set-up-a-three-point-lighting-system-key-fill-backlighting#>





# Camera

Surprisingly not that much of an issue

Most newer devices have very good quality cameras

Phones >>>>>> laptops

Age of device makes the biggest differences

External HD cameras are not expensive

# Camera - video quality

Video quality depends on:

1. Quality of camera
2. Speed of internet connection

Slow internet:

Dropped calls

Choppy video

# Camera - video quality

Do a speed test beforehand

If they offer you a test call - take it

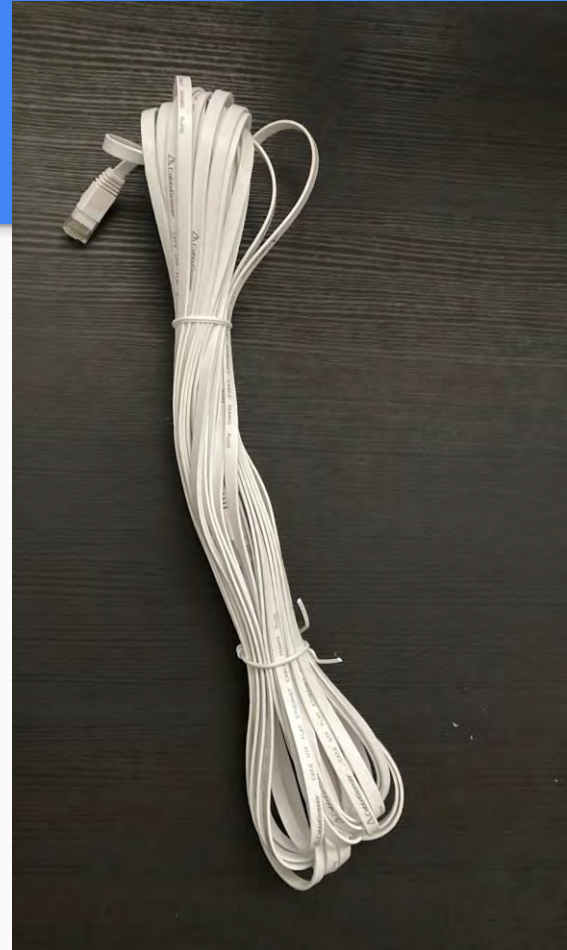
Internet speed of 30MB download / 10MB upload is probably the minimum

More is better if multiple people / devices in your home

# Camera - video quality

A few hacks for video quality if internet is poor

- Wired connection better than wifi
- Get a long ethernet cable and run it from modem to computer
- Turn off devices than ping your wifi router
- Get a mesh system for your home (routers provided by ISP are not good)
- Close other programs on your computer
- Use data if wifi is unreliable



# Camera - choosing your device

Desktop - stable base and biggest screen

Laptop - portable but need to watch out for angle

Phone - need to stabilize it somewhere

Tablet- should be avoided at all costs

# Camera

Quality of camera is important

Position of camera is more important

# Camera

Camera should be at eye level

I would say - slightly above eye level with a gentle tilt downwards

Think of how a camera operator holds a camera

Shoot from the top down

Not the bottom up

# Camera

Desktop - built in camera will be high enough to be almost eye level

Laptop - invariably will give you a nose shot



# Camera - Laptop

The way we use laptops is wrong

Laptops are too low for interview

Put something to rise it up

Default is a pile of books



# Camera - phone

## Many advantages

- Probably the newest piece of technology you have
- Camera is very likely HD
- The back camera is probably even better
  - Mixed blessing being able to see yourself
- You need to anchor it somewhere
- Get a tripod



# Tripods

Basically a must if you plan to use your phone

Elevates your phone to eye level

Keeps it steady

Remember to keep it in landscape not portrait mode

DO NOT hold it in your hand

# Camera - tablets

It's a trap!

Problem 1: impossible to mount properly for a good angle

Most simple tripods will not accommodate them

Flap covers will angle them up, not straight



# Camera - tablets

Problem 2: screen and camera are too far apart

Human nature is to look at the screen

You should be looking at the camera

# Camera

Phones and tablets

Need to be positioned in landscape

Camera will always be off the side



You're looking here

You should be looking here



# Camera

Tricks for maintaining eyeline

Put little post if just under the camera lens and look at that (not screen)

Point at camera in prep and aim eyes there

On desktop/laptop call up preview screen

# Camera / platform

Skype vs. Zoom vs. FaceTime vs. Teams vs. others

All roughly equivalent except

I think Skype is best

# Camera / Platform

Skype has one advantage over other platforms

Preview screen that overlays the video feed

Advantage- you can watch yourself and maintain eyeline

Video is in background so you can see when you are off camera

× **Audio & Video Settings**

VIDEO

Camera

FaceTime HD Camera ▾



Change background

- (Off)
- Blur
- (Landscape)
- (Indoor)
- (Portrait)
- (Holiday)
- ...

AUDIO

You should be looking here



You're looking here

# Camera / Platform

Before Covid:

You couldn't see the show

You would be looking at a black screen


Now:

That problem has been largely fixed

You will see the show (double edged sword)

# Camera / Platform

Video interviews have predictable format (~3 min interview)

- Single shot host intro
- Split screen with you and host 
- Single shot on you answering question
- B-roll as you complete your answer
- Back to split screen for follow-up question
- Repeat once (or twice)
- Sign off

# Camera / Platform

Turn off emoticons

Now platforms will show “Thumbs up” or “Hearts”

Turn that off. You aren't 13

Must turn it off from each platform individually





# Background

Background doesn't matter as much as people think

Light trumps background every time

In a pinch, face a window and blur your background

# Background

## Quick fixes

Blur your background

Green screen (looks fake but whatever)

People are more tolerant of work from home these days



# Background

If you want to get fancy

Depth

Artwork / plants

Books (but not the bookcase shot)

Slight asymmetry (corners, look good)

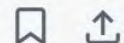
Check your background in the preview before going live



**Room Rater** @ratemyskyperoom · Mar 18, 2022



One of our Canadian top doc rooms. Pillow. Depth. Art. Strong plant game.  
10/10 @drlabos



# Background / Framing

Before the interview

Framing - usually handled by control room

Center the shot

Back up or move forward to “match” the host

Not all control rooms will do that, so be aware

# Background

Make sure people don't walk into the frame

A good control room will switch to B-roll if that happens

But not everybody is good at their job

So just lock the door of your room

**BBC**  
**NEWS**



# In-studio or camera crew interviews

Simplifies but doesn't completely remove the problems

Should still think about light/position

You need a big room for journalists to set up

Windows are your friend

They may bring their own lightsource but maybe not

Budget cutbacks

# What to wear

Pants - do not flash the control room

Everybody wears pyjama pants when doing skype interviews

Things are more casual than they once were

Can't go wrong with shirt and blazer

# What to wear

Clean and ironed

People see wrinkles

Colors matter

- White has glare

- Lines / checkered patterns make waves

- Solid dark colors - but try to match your style

# What to wear - in studio or with crew

- Same basic rules
  - But even more important
  - A checkered or plaid jacket will “dance” on TV
  - A crisp white shirt will shine like the sun
- Think about the microphone wire
  - Jackets hide everything
  - Don't wear a dress (or cover it with a jacket)
  - Without a jacket, the wire and box will show

# Should I wear makeup?

You can if you normally would

You may look washed out under harsh lighting

Less of an issue at home where you can control the light source

Noses and foreheads will look shiny

In studio they may or may not have a makeup person (budget cutbacks)

CBC National does

CTV Montreal has make-up aid out for self application

# Details matter

People on TV look beautiful

Largely due to:

- Genetics

- Selection bias

- Good lighting and make-up

# Sound

Everything up until now has been about visuals

Sound matters too, but harder to screw up

Only one major recommendation

- Get an external microphone

- Don't bang against it

# Sound - microphone techniques

Too far away - room noise

Too close - distortions and plosives







# Sound

Earphones are less necessary than they once were

In the before times, platforms would pick up echo

Sound from video would get picked up by microphones

Technology has advanced to the point where that doesn't happen anymore

# Sound

Many work computers do not have external audio microphones

Mic on earphones may be your only source of audio input/output

Make sure you check audio input / output settings

Don't accidentally use earphones as the microphone if you have a USB mic

# Sound

For a camera crew / studio interview

They will mic you up

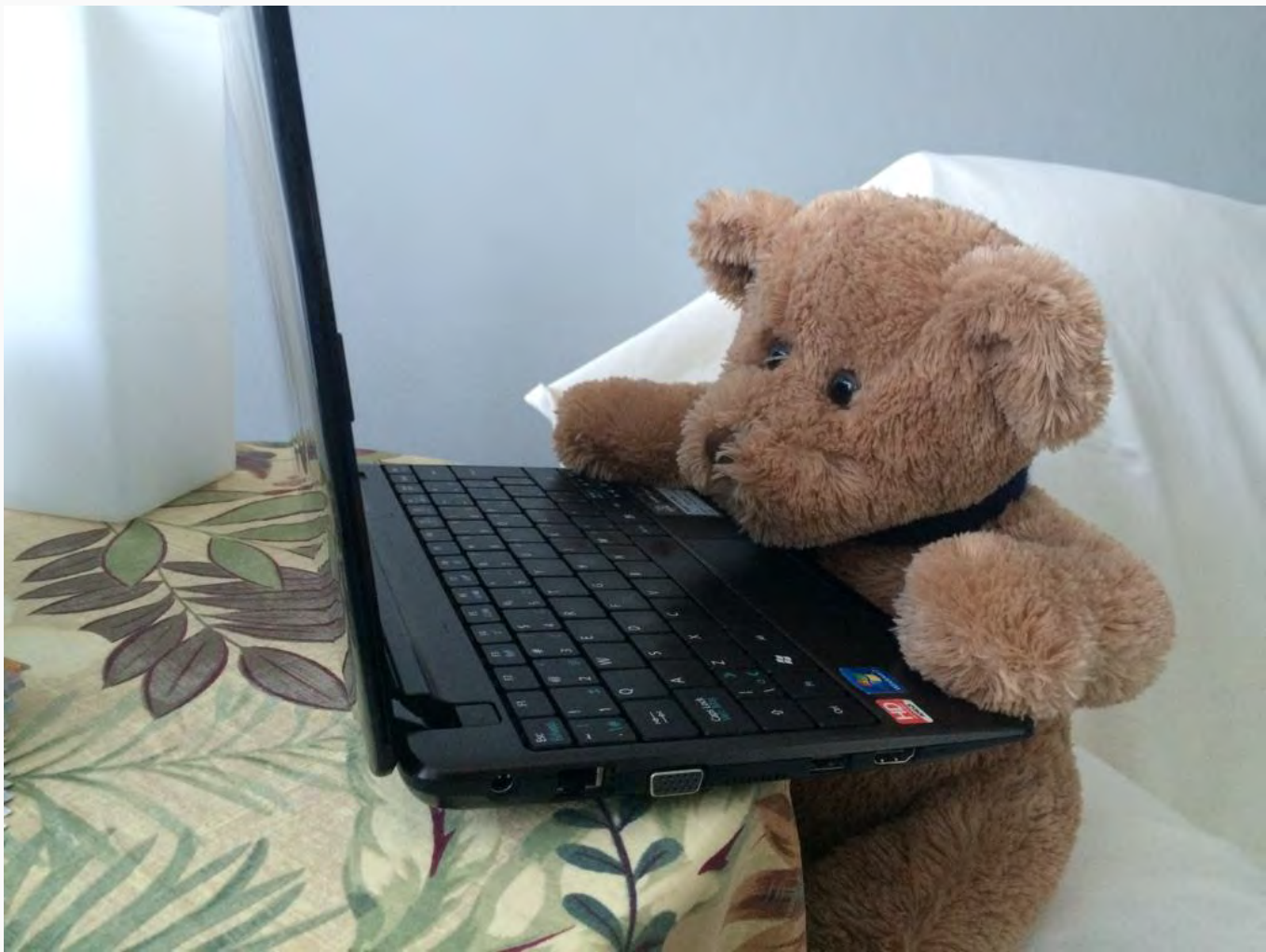
So less of a consideration

Don't wear necklaces / scarfs that bang against microphone

# Booking an interview

Journalists are like bears

They are more afraid of you than you are of them



# Booking an interview

Journalists are like bears

They are more afraid of you than you are of them

Journalists are on deadline

The news happens today, not next week

Say yes ~~to the dress~~ to the reporter

# Booking an interview

Sometimes interviews get cancelled

Sometimes reporters ghost you

It happens, don't take it personally

Many academics "don't answer their emails"

People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones

# Booking an interview

If you want to be interviewed, you need to make yourself available.

Journalists have their production meeting at 10AM

They probably need to start editing at 3PM to file by 4 or 5PM for evening news

You having a “busy week” is of no use to them

# Roles in a newsroom

Journalists/hosts - write stories do interviews

Producers - plan stories book guests

For TV - the hosts don't book the interviews

- Chase producers - book the guests

- Senior producers - plan the show

- Executive producers - run everything

- Control Room - handles the technical set up

# Conducting an interview

Live TV segment for the news

Live to tape for later

Segment for a TV show / news magazine

# Live news segment

There's no editing.

Continue until you're told you're clear

Ignore telephones / cars / trucks -

probably won't come through microphone

**BBC**  
**NEWS**



# Live TV interviews

Video interviews have predictable format (~3 min interview)

- Single shot host intro
- Split screen with you and host
- Single shot on you answering question
- B-roll as you complete your answer
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- Sign off

# Live TV interviews

When they loop back to the host (in split screen):

Your answer to the question should be wrapping up

Having a timer up, could be useful or distracting

I watch the clock when doing radio interviews

Speak in sound bites

Rule of threes - three points you want to make

You may or may not know the questions beforehand.

# Live TV interviews

Sometimes they will prompt you with:

“We only have about a minute left...”

“And finally....”

“And very quickly...”

For me, the producers give me a 30 second warning in my ear to start landing the plane.

# Live TV interviews

If the host seems distracted

The producers are probably talking to them in the ear piece

They are reading questions someone else wrote for them (some adlib)

They may not be listening to you

They may ask you a question you already answered

They may mispronounce your name or your affiliation

Don't make the host look bad

Most people don't notice minor flubs.

# Live to tape

Same basic rules, but now they can edit (a bit)

- you can redo a question
  - Give them a clean break (for the editing)
  - Redo your answer in its entirety
  - Clarify in advance what they will or will not do
  - Local affiliates have less resources than national

# Recorded segment

Will be edited

90% of what you say will not be used

You will and should repeat yourself

Don't say "As I said before..." (continuity errors)

You will do multiple takes

Keep answers short to facilitate editing

# Content

I have surprisingly little to say

If they are asking, it's because they want to know what you want to say

There are no “tricks” to good interviews

It's public speaking on a small scale

Avoid verbal placeholders, ex. “That's a good question”

Keep answers short

# Content

Journalists are not out to trap you

There is very little gotcha journalism

Picking a fight with journalists does not serve you well

# A cautionary word

There are some not nice people out there in world

Never read the comments section of videos



**Valerie Scarpelli** 6 months ago

SHAME on You CBC . PEOPLE ARE SCARED OUT OF THEIR WITS. WHERE IS THE HUMAN CONNECTION TO you. WE ALL ARE SCARED, WHY AREN't YOU????



REPLY



**Valerie Scarpelli** 6 months ago

Dr C Labos looks like that Crypto Currency Guy. They want us separated. We are not Germs humanity. We are God's LOVE. do not buy into devils lies.



REPLY



**Apollo** 6 months ago



**Count Richard** 2 months ago

Why are you interviewing this quack? He starts off by saying "there is no evidence".

 17  REPLY

[▲ Hide 2 replies](#)



**Jim Trainor** 2 months ago

His statement was an incoherent mess. Not a good advertisement for oneself as a doctor!!!

 4  REPLY



**xxxwindsor** 2 months ago

More important question: Why the edit @ [0:04](#) ?

 1  REPLY



SamE 6 months ago

Can we all agree that this doctor completely discredited himself and exposed all the contradictions and illogical assumptions in the current 'response effort'?

👍 5 🗨️ REPLY



PCBoardRepair 6 months ago

Why don't you do a story about SIEMENS MILLTRONICS in Peterborough that isn't sending it workers home.....instead hundreds cram into its factory and offices everyday....making products for China market is not an essential service.....why don't you profile the companies that are putting their employees in danger and not helping the community by observing the requests of the health department

👍 1 🗨️ REPLY

▼ [View reply](#)



Amanda Tyler 6 months ago

My question to the expert:- why are you still a virgin???

👍 🗨️ REPLY

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Likes



CTV Montreal  @CTVMontreal · 13h ...

Labos: 'There's no good answer here'



[montreal.ctvnews.ca](http://montreal.ctvnews.ca)

Labos: 'There's no good answer here'



7



1



3



Peter Chiotis  @ICONMADNESS · 11h ...

Back in my village they would hang these traitors! How much money r they paying u to sound like a quack? Ur an embarrassment to the Hippocratic oath. Dr. Malaka I hope u sleep well at night. Imagine your soul being rattled for eternity!



1



2





**Dr. Christopher Labos**

4d · 🌐

Update on vaccine approval for kids under 5. Plus how the Canadian women's hockey team showed that masks are not dangerous. Weekly check in with CTV.



[MONTREAL.CTVNEWS.CA](https://MONTREAL.CTVNEWS.CA)

**Why the long wait to approve vaccine for young kids**



**Kosta Marnellos**

YOU'RE A CLOWN JUST BECAUSE YOU SHOW YOUR UGLY FACE ON TELEVISION DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANY MORE RELEVANT THAN A HOMELESS PERSON

38m Like Reply Message



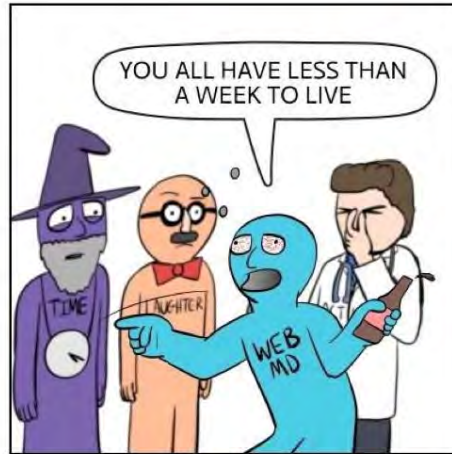
Reply as Dr. Christopher Labos



Write a comment



Second Opinions





*the*  
BODY  *of* EVIDENCE

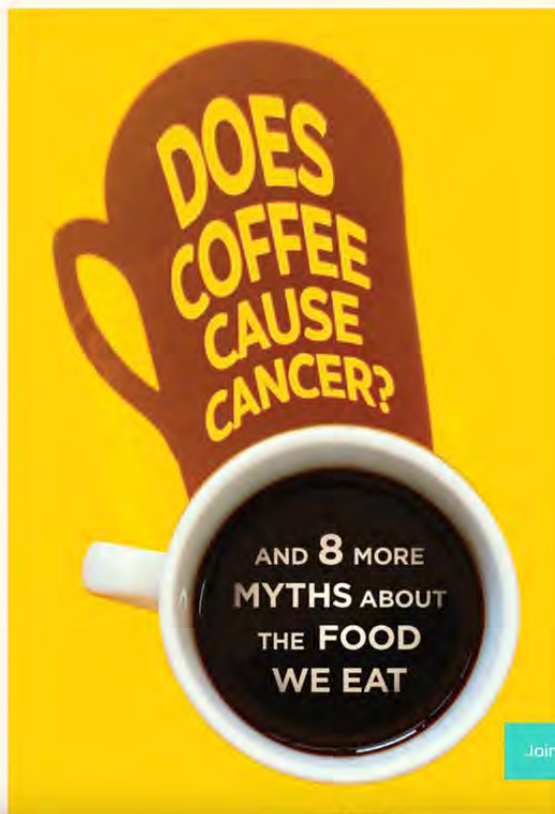


LABOS



JARRY

BOOKS &gt; DOES COFFEE CAUSE CANCER?: AND 8 MORE MYTHS ABOUT THE FOOD WE EAT



## Does Coffee Cause Cancer?: And 8 More Myths about the Food We Eat

*Labos, Dr. Christopher*

\$24.95 CAD

DESCRIPTION

AUTHOR

DETAILS

In this fascinating, refreshingly clarifying book about food, food myths, and how sloppy science perpetuates misconceptions about food, a medical doctor on his way to a conference gets drawn into conversations that answer the following questions:

- Does **vitamin C** prevent the common cold? And if it works, why does it only work in Canadian soldiers, ultramarathon runners, and skiers?
- Was **red meat** really declared a carcinogen by the WHO? Does that mean I should become a vegetarian? And who decides what gets labeled as red meat and white meat?
- Is **salt** really not that bad for you and did a group of researchers really want to experiment on prisoners to prove the point?
- Does **coffee** cause cancer or heart attacks? Why did a California court say coffee needed a warning label?
- Is **red wine** really good for your heart, and what makes the French Paradox such a paradox?
- Why did the *New England Journal of Medicine* link eating **chocolate** with winning a Nobel Prize?
- Why were **eggs** once bad for you but now good for you again?

# Part 2 - the workshop

First, bathroom break

Then we reconvene here to do mock interviews

You tell me the subject

Give me 2 or 3 talking points

Set yourself up

And off we go

The point is to screw up here where stakes are low