

MODULE

18

Interview Details

The chair decides more than you think

WHAT THIS MODULE COVERS

Everything from Module 17 applies when you are seated, plus a set of mechanics that nobody tells you and that quietly wreck a great many interviews.

Start with the chair, which is genuinely critical. Put your **backside to the back of the chair** so your torso touches the back. Now check: are your feet flat on the ground? If the chair is too high and you are up on your toes, that crushes your body language — your legs go tense and you look uncomfortable. If it adjusts, lower it. If it does not, pull your backside forward until your feet are flat.

Swivel chairs are a specific trap. Tested on thousands of people worldwide, about **52% swivel during an interview** — often only slightly. Audiences notice and start asking why you are moving, whether you are nervous, whether you dislike the interviewer. The fix: **put your feet together**. It locks your hips and makes swivelling almost uncomfortable.

Hands go **in your lap** — not up at chest height, which looks like a Tyrannosaurus Rex, and not slumped forward. That naturally rests your forearms near the armrests, which is where the next problem lives: people put weight on armrests, lock an arm down, and then try to gesture from a pinned position. If the armrests lift, lift them. If not, touch them but never lean on them.

Crossing your legs is fine **if your gesture box stays open**. Obama crosses in most of his interviews and it looks professional because he is thin enough that his knee does not block the box. If crossing pulls you forward or cuts off half your gesture area, do not.

One more, and it costs people constantly: **look at the interviewer, not the camera**. The camera finds you; you do not find the camera. About 15% of viewers think you are being rude if you turn away from the person asking the question.

52%

swivel during an interview

15%

think you are rude if you look at the camera

2 sec

the nodding rule

50 sec

the professor who was a statue

KEY CONCEPTS

Feet together in a swivel chair

Locks the hips. Feet apart lets you rotate freely, and half of all people do without realising it.

Skirts and the Lady Diana

For a skirt or dress above the knee, cross at the ankle and pull the feet under the chair — or use what is known as the Lady Diana, legs angled to one side. Both test well and both stop you spending the interview tugging at a hemline. Steve recommends Chris Jahnke's *The Well-Spoken Woman* for more on this.

Never put weight on the armrests

It locks your arm and destroys your ability to gesture. Watch interviews and you will be startled how many people try to gesture with one arm pinned.

Do not waste the introduction

The host introduces you and gives you a beat. Most people say "thank you" and stop. That is a missed opportunity — give three or four seconds of smile and personality. It matters especially if the first question turns out to be brutal, because you have already established who you are.

The two-second rule

While a long question is being asked, the **statue** is the worst option and the **bobblehead** is too much. Small movement every couple of seconds, with real emotion where the content allows. Steve watched a Cambridge professor who does interviews constantly hold perfectly still for fifty seconds while his students went crazy behind the two-way mirror.

REMEMBER

- Backside to the back of the chair, feet flat. Adjust the chair or move forward.
- Feet together in a swivel chair. It locks your hips.
- Hands in your lap. No weight on the armrests, ever.
- Look at the interviewer. The camera will find you.

PRACTICE

Exercises

Type directly into the shaded boxes below and save the file. Come back to your answers after you have practised — this is your record of what changed.

EXERCISE 1

Run the chair check

Sit in the chair you would actually use for a video interview and work through every element.

Is it adjustable? Does it swivel? Does it have armrests? Do they lift?

With your backside at the back, are your feet flat? If not, what did you have to change?

Film yourself seated for two minutes. Did you swivel? Did you lean on an armrest?

Tick each one once you have done it:

- ☐ Checked adjustability
- ☐ Tested feet-together to lock the hips

- ☐ Lifted or avoided the armrests
- ☐ Filmed and reviewed two minutes seated

EXERCISE 2

Practise the introduction moment

The three seconds after the host says your name are yours. Most people waste them.

Write what you will say instead of just "thank you."

Film it. Did you smile long enough for it to register?

EXERCISE 3

Drill listening on camera

Have someone ask you a long, hard question while you record only your listening.

Watch it with the sound off. Statue, bobblehead, or two-second rule?

Where in the question could you have shown real emotion and did not?

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

One thing from this module I will use the next time I speak:

When and where I will use it: