

Getting Comfortable Talking to a Camera



In October 1968, Richard Nixon walked into a television studio to film ads. He sat stiffly on the edge of a desk, looked at the camera, and started to talk.

“I wish he’d use the teleprompter,” one aide said.

Another aide replied, “People think he’s reading anyway.”

While Nixon had never mastered the teleprompter, he did get good at looking at the camera and recording all of his ads without a script.

It took multiple takes to find the flow and the words that felt right. But he’d tweak a sentence here and there, tighten his opening and try to improve each take.

This was all part of the “New Nixon.” Gone was the candidate of those bad 1960 television performances. In 1968 he embraced TV, hired ad agencies, and got good at talking to the camera.

It wasn't easy, but his style of speaking directly to the American people worked. On election night 1968, Nixon won the presidency.

Here’s the thing, even politicians like Nixon had to work to get good on camera. For most normal people, talking to the camera is hard.

You don’t like the sound of your voice and think, “*Do I really sound like that?*” You notice little imperfections and think, “*Is my right eyebrow really higher than my left?*” You see all these things you perceive as wrong or cringy and think, “*This is never going to work.*”

Then you watch the people who are good. They talk to the camera naturally and look relaxed. You think, “*I wish I sounded like that.*”

The reality is talking to the camera is just a skill. And like any skill, you can get better at it with a little practice. Here’s how you practice.

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Take a 2-Week Camera Challenge.

Film yourself talking to the camera for one to two minutes every day for 14 days.

Keep it simple and just use your iPhone. Don't worry about making the setup perfect. Point it at yourself, look at the lens, then talk about something that happened that day. You're not going to post any of these videos, so don't overthink them.

Each day, focus on four things:



Rest your eyes on the lens, don't stare at it.

Resting your eyes softens the whole feel of your eyes and facial expressions.



Talk to one person

Picture a single person who you're talking to. Then, talk to that person like you would with a friend over a cup of coffee or a beer. Talking casually to one person gets you out of "presenting" mode and makes it more natural.



Up your energy 10%

The camera pulls the energy out of us. What feels normal to a person in the room comes across flat to someone watching online. A little extra energy makes the videos feel more like the in-person you.



Pick one thing

After each video, watch it and choose one thing you liked and one thing to improve next time. Don't be tempted to pick multiple things. Just one fix for each video.

The Bottom Line

Remember, getting comfortable talking to the camera is a skill, and you can get better at it. Take the 2-Week Camera Challenge and you'll be amazed at how much more comfortable you feel on camera.