



Tips on Acing a Media Interview

1. Gather information. When a reporter calls you, don't feel pressured to launch into an interview immediately. Instead, ask the reporter these five key questions:

- a. What is your name and your media outlet?
- b. What is your story about?
- c. What type of questions will you ask in the interview?
- d. Who else will you interview for your story?
- e. What is your deadline?

From there, you can determine if you are the right spokesperson for the story and if you are comfortable speaking to the reporter or their outlet. If you do want to proceed with the interview, set up a mutually agreeable time to speak call them back. If you are not the right person to address their questions, or you are not comfortable doing the media interview, please refer the reporter to Suelan Toye, Faculty of Arts Communications.

2. Be prepared. Think of potential questions the reporter might ask. Prepare answers for each one and rehearse them.

3. Think about your audiences. Decide who you would ideally like to reach through the media interview: students? alumni? researchers? policy makers? These will be your key audiences. When speaking to the reporter, target your answer to those audiences and what you would like them to know.

4. Key messages. Think about the three main points you want to make to your key audiences and write them down. These are your key messages. You also don't need to repeat these points. Rather, weave them naturally into the conversation during the interview with the reporter.

5. Pause. Answer. Stop. Before you respond to a reporter's question, pause for a moment to gather your thoughts. Answer each question with brief sentences at an easy pace. Then stop talking. Don't feel as though you need to get all your points in one long answer. Instead, give the reporter the chance to ask more questions so that they can learn about your research at their pace. If it's a pre-recorded, on-air interview, this also allows editors to easily clip that great answer you gave without too much editing. Feel free to also write down the questions as the reporter interviews you to help you focus.

6. Anecdotes. Using examples to illustrate your point is a great way to add "colour" to your quotes--and weave in a key message. You can refer to a specific study you conducted to illustrate your quote. Anecdotes may also convey new information that the reporter may not have known.

7. Bridging tough questions. If a reporter asks you a difficult question that you are not sure how to answer, you can bring the conversation back to your key messages by using bridging phrases such as:

- Let's put your question into perspective...
- That's an interesting viewpoint. What I can tell you is ...
- That's not my area of expertise, but what's important to remember is...
- Using these phrases will help you steer clear of hostile questions without sounding combative or evasive.

8. Avoid jargon. Reporters won't understand what you are saying if you use a lot of academic language. Use plain language to get your points across.

9. Off-the-record. There is no such thing to reporters. If you say that, it's waving a red flag in front of their faces, saying "Pay attention to this."

10. Never say "No comment." Try instead, "That's an interesting question. What I can say is ..." (go back to your key messages.)



Media Contact

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