



## Media Interview Tip Sheet

### Before the Interview

- **Practice Makes Possible:** Rehearse for the interview, ideally with a trusted friend, family member or colleague who will provide honest feedback and helpful critique.
- **Anticipate Questions:** Why did the journalist reach out to you? What are they going to ask about?
- **Be Prepared:** Based on what you think those questions will be, are there any statistics or backup details you can share?
  - Gather this information into an easy-to-understand format and have it ready to share with the journalist. It's easier for them to see big numbers vs. just hearing them, for example.
  - If it's an in-person interview, you can print out the information and hand it to the journalist. For a phone or Zoom interview, send everything via email right before or during your interview.
- **Be Confident:** Assume the "Superman" pose, crack a joke, listen to a favorite song, engage in positive self-talk, or do something else to make yourself relax and feel grounded before you walk into the interview.
- **Messages:** What do YOU want to say? The reporter called this meeting, but what are some key messages that you can get across during your time together?
  - Choose two or three things you really want to focus on.
  - Make sure you have backup information, details or anecdotes ready to share. Not all of what you're saying needs to be on the info sheet you're sharing with the journalist, but certainly numbers, statistics and difficult-to-understand information should be.



## During the Interview

- **You Know Your Stuff:** Nobody in the room is going to know more about this than you do. You're the expert. Take confidence in that fact.
- **Remember Your ABC's:** Accuracy. Brevity. Clarity.
- **Short Is Sweet:** Answer questions thoroughly but succinctly. You want to be quotable, but you don't want to lose anyone's attention or interest.
- **Be Complete:** The likelihood of your complete answer being used is very slim, whether the interview will be in print, heard or seen on camera. Do your best to speak in a complete "sound bite" that will allow for editing around what you're trying to say. Begin your answer by reiterating the question, "The reason we're so excited about this is ..." or "The number of people who will be impacted by this is ..."
- **Count to 10:** A good sound bite should be no more than 10 seconds. Practice getting each of your key messages across – as complete thoughts – in 10 seconds or less.
- **Keep It Simple:** Don't use technical terms, jargon or industry abbreviations. Even if the journalist covers this beat and will know what you're talking about, the audience may not.
- **Paint a Picture with Words:** Use anecdotes to "illustrate" your points and help people grasp what you're saying. Use real-life examples that will be meaningful to the audience.
- **Take It Seriously:** You can be friendly, but don't try to be funny. That can come off wrong in many scenarios.
- **Don't Speculate:** Never, ever guess. You either know an answer or you don't. If you don't know the answer, be honest with the reporter and then offer to follow up with the information they need. Don't ever offer your opinion as a fact, even if the reporter seems to be guiding you to do that.
- **Speak Up:** If the reporter says something you know is incorrect or seems to misunderstand a concept you've tried to present, find a polite way to correct them.
- **Say What YOU Want, Not What THEY Want:** Don't get a false sense of friendliness or security and be lulled into saying something you didn't mean to say. Stick to those key messages you practiced.
- **Get Back on Course:** If the reporter steers you in a direction you don't want to go, use a "bridge" and find a way to get back to your points.
- **There Is No "Off the Record":** Believe that anything you say to the journalist – whether or not the microphone is on or the notebook is out, whether you're in the midst of the interview or just walking to or from an office – is on the record. Don't say it if you don't want to see or hear it again ... with your name linked to it.
- **Silence Is Uncomfortable. It's Also Okay:** Nobody likes silence and reporters know it. Say what you need to say and then stop ... even if they look at you like they want to hear more or if they don't ask anything else. They're hoping you'll fill that void with words ... and this is when you could say something you don't want to say.



### After the Interview

- **Follow Up:** If you promised information, get it to the reporter immediately. If you offered to connect them to another contact, do it right away. Don't let time pass between when they need something and when you get it to them.
- **Say Thanks:** If you liked the story or you want to have an ongoing relationship with this journalist or outlet, thank them for the story and let them know you're happy to be a future resource.
- **Fix It:** If there's something inaccurate in the story, reach out to the reporter to let them know. Things can often be corrected online after the fact. Be polite about these requests, though; don't make anyone feel silly for having made a mistake.



### Dressing for the Camera

- Wear a solid color that flatters your skin tone.
  - Blues are typically the best choice for most people.
  - Dark blue suits are great for many men and deep pinks work well for many women.
  - Skip bright white, which can confuse the camera because it causes lighting problems. If you need to wear a light shirt with a suit, aim for off-white vs. bright white. Better yet, go with light blue.
  - Skip anything green. It makes almost everyone look terrible on camera and can make you fade into a studio backdrop.
  - Skip “busy” or repeating patterns, especially small ones. This includes pinstripes, houndstooth and paisley. The more contrasting the colors are – dark vs. light – the worse it will look on camera.
- Logos are okay if they're part of your message.
  - Be cautious about how casual you look, though.
  - If the logo will be too small to really see on camera, it's probably going to be more distracting than helpful.
- Dress for the microphone.
  - Have a collar or something else they can clip a microphone to.
  - That said, skip accessorizing with a scarf around your neck. This actually causes more problems than it solves.
  - Try to have a pocket. This can be hard with women's attire, but it can be helpful.
- If you know an outfit tends to wrinkle, avoid it for interviews. You'll get out of the car looking rumpled and there's nothing you can do about it.
- Choose longer socks if you're going to be sitting. You don't want bare skin to show.
- Avoid additional or very large jewelry. It often makes noise when you move or can cause bad reflections in the light.
- Skip the glasses, which create distracting reflections. If you need them in order to see, though, wear them!