



Television and Radio Media Tips

Preparation

- Since radio and television news programs are broadcast many times throughout the day, and may be posted online in advance of broadcast, reporters' deadlines are urgent. If you are asked for an interview, tell the reporter yes or no as quickly as possible.
- Talk with the reporter about the interview before it starts. Find out what the questions will be so you can prepare your response. In preparation for a radio interview, jot down the two or three points you want to make, and use the notes as a reminder when you answer the reporter's questions. But be flexible and natural, and don't read your material.
- Find out in advance whether the interview is edited or "live." If you agree to a live interview, be sure you are comfortable thinking on your feet and responding off the cuff.
- If you are doing a radio interview on the telephone, choose a location where you can screen out extraneous noises. Make sure you turn off call-waiting. Turn off your computer, if possible. Avoid rooms with loud background hums from air conditioning or heating units. If a reporter can come to you or meet elsewhere, this is best as you'll sound better than you will over the phone.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before an interview if it takes place in a studio, but remember that flexibility is the rule when dealing with television reporters. They may arrive early or late because they are preparing stories back-to-back.

Presentation

- If you are doing a television interview, take the time to look in the mirror, if possible, just before going on camera. The reporter may not tell you that your collar is folded over, you have spinach in your teeth, or your hair is out of place.
- Dark clothes look best on TV. Avoid checkers, stripes, plaids, or other designs, as they can cause problems with color TV pictures. Avoid large, jangling, or reflective jewelry.
- Stand comfortably and alert — with your hands at your sides. If seated, sit forward and erect. If you are sitting at a desk, keep your hands above the desk. If sitting on a couch or in a casual chair, don't clasp your hands in your lap. Don't tap the table or chair with your hands.
- When being interviewed on television, look at the reporter, not the camera. The only exception is in a satellite interview, when the reporter or anchor may not be on location. If you're uncertain where to look, ask. Don't shift your eyes when answering because it connotes that you are trying to avoid an issue and are untrustworthy. Use natural gestures.
- Pay attention to nodding your head. If you nod your head when answering a question, it may convey your agreement.

- Talk clearly in short phrases. Try to keep your answers brief. A typical sound bite is 8 to 15 seconds. A long radio story is 45 seconds.
- Typical TV stories run about 80 seconds. Be concise and to the point. Of the 80 seconds, your sound bite will be 10-15 seconds. Keep in mind that even if you are asked lots of questions, most will not be used. And reporters will try to ask a question over and over to get a different (more interesting) response. Stick to your message. Answer each question as if it is the only answer that will make it to the air.
- Try not to talk too fast.
- Answer one question at a time and select the portion of a multiple-part question that you feel best addresses the issues you are discussing. Brevity is the key to TV interviews.
- If you feel you didn't make your point clearly, ask the reporter to record you again.
- In edited interviews, do not answer questions too quickly; pause briefly before answering. This helps the reporter get a "clean" sound bite and also has the added benefit of allowing you time to think before you answer.
- The reporter may ask you to incorporate the question into your response to give context. The question may be edited out of the broadcast.
- Don't repeat a reporter's negative terms or phrasing. You don't want that to be the clip that shows up on TV. If a reporter asks a negative question, you don't have to answer it.

After the Interview

- If you are asked to "chat" while the cameraman shoots "B" roll (non-interview footage, cutaway shots, etc), be sure your body language and comments are appropriate.
- Obtain a tape of the final broadcast if possible and critique your own performance, looking for ways you might improve in the future.