

WHAT TO DO WHEN A NEWSPAPER REPORTER CALLS

1. Always be courteous; rude people make bad news.
2. If the call is unexpected find out what they want and ask them to ring back in 5 minutes. This gives you time to think, and write out what you want to say. If you agree to ring them back, make sure you do. If a busy reporter suggests visiting you, welcome this and make sure the kettle is on.
3. When giving information to the media it is best to be factual, frank, deliberate and to the point but ALWAYS in a firm, friendly manner.
4. Answer questions in your own words and in complete sentences. A "Yes" or "No" to a loaded question can have startling consequences.
5. You're not bound to answer every question, don't be bullied. If possible make sure that you control the interview in an astute and gentle way.
6. Be positive – mere denials or "no comments" suggests you have something to hide. This could be an opportunity to kill false rumours. Mistakes multiply when people refuse to talk so be helpful and the reporter will usually respond in the same way.
7. If you have problems answering a question, don't flannel. If appropriate tell the reporter you'll find out and call back.
8. The reporter has column inches to fill. Feed them your facts in a way that dictates the angle of the interview. If you don't want it reported, don't say it!
9. Rarely, if ever, go "off the record". It just isn't worth it or safe. This is not to misjudge the reporter, rather if something is worth saying be honest and say it!

TV AND RADIO INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Be prepared - find out:

- Who's doing the interview?
- What's the interview about?
- What's likely to be asked?
- What is the programme and who is the audience?
- Is anyone else being interviewed? At the same time or separately? (Are they hoping for an argument?)
- Is it live or recorded? (When it's live it can't be edited)
- How long is needed?
- Tell the interviewer beforehand if there are areas you can't speak about.

Make your points - Think of *two or three points* you want to make during the interview. Write them down and make sure you make them! Get them in as swiftly as possible because if it's live the interview will probably be short, and if it's recorded, they might not listen to the end of the interview even if that's where your killer point is.

Keep it simple - Few people sit down and listen to radio, they're invariably doing something else at the same time so complicated sentences and facts get lost. The simpler you can keep it the better.

Keep it natural - You're talking to ordinary people in their homes; imagine you're speaking to just one person. Avoid jargon and keep it friendly.

Use your imagination - Painting pictures in people's minds mean they remember what you say. Use examples if you can (but don't use people's names without permission).

Treat all microphones as if they are live - Don't say anything in front of a microphone that you wouldn't be happy to hear going out on air.

Have confidence - You are the expert and remember most interviewers simply want information from you. Don't go in expecting a rough time. Having said that, be aware of current controversial issues.

Impressions - Your manner and what you look like and sound like have much more impact on most people than anything you say. Smile if appropriate (it relaxes your voice). If possible know something about the interviewer.

Don't be intimidated - You will usually know far more about the topic than the person asking the questions. The interviewer's only role is to draw you out to help you tell your story. You are the expert. Be prepared for the occasional personal question.

Interrupting - Cutting in is unattractive but if you decide it's necessary do it decisively.

Opportunity - Use the opportunity for maximum benefit. Whatever questions are asked ensure that you make the points you want to. Never get angry.

TV & RADIO INTERVIEWS - PRACTICAL ADVICE:

Television interview

What you look like does matter. Make-up in moderation and a relaxed but professional style are best. No white tops or herringbone fabric. To avoid the "bunching up" of your jacket sit on the back of your jacket.

Telephone interview

When they first call, ask them to phone back in 5 minutes. Use that time to make notes – your 3 points. But don't write a script - you'll sound wooden.

Studio interview

Take your 3 points clearly written on a small card. Position yourself about 12" away from the microphone. Concentrate on the interviewer – treat it as a conversation. Don't thump the table or rustle papers.

Remote studio

You operate the equipment yourself, but it will be self-evident when you arrive. You can't see the interviewer, so listen hard. Answer when it's your turn; butt in confidently if necessary. Treat it like a telephone conversation although in this case you'll be using headphones or an earpiece.

Phone-in

Treat it like a discussion and respond positively. "That's a good point, but the real issue here is ...". You are free to take notes – the name of the caller, the point they've made or the next one you want to make.