



Working with the Media: Ensuring a successful experience

Before embarking on a plan to tell your story about your work—or the work of your student, you need to ask yourself a couple of questions...and you can use the journalistic trick of asking yourself the “**Five W’s**”:

Who cares about this story? Who does my work affect? Who is my audience?

What is the main focus of my story? What will people want to know about it?

Where is this story best suited to play out—in a classroom, a lab, your office...or somewhere else?

When should this story be told? Does it coincide with another event that complements it? Is there a reason for timing this story a certain way?

Why: Why should the audience care about this?

Viewers, listeners, and readers are looking for stories to which they connect and in which in some way they empathize, and news writers and editors have a responsibility to their audiences to deliver the product that’s needed and wanted. With a little advance planning, your experiences with the media can be positive, informative, and exactly what you hope they can be as a means to promote your special knowledge.

What makes a good interview?

- Engaging Content
- Relevance to the daily lives of the audience
- Timely (and timed) subject matter

Tips for ensuring a good interview

The most important step to take is to think ahead about the three or four most important points you want to make during any interview. The reporter will most likely have specific questions in mind, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be ready with your own points.

Think through what you want to get across, remembering that the average literacy level of a newspaper reader is Grade 9-so **keep your language at that level**. Keep your responses as simple and conversational as possible-tell this story so that readers/viewers/listeners can relate to it.

Develop three or four full statements, single-focused and about 15 seconds in length. For example:

The fundamental issue in my research is _____.

I chose to research this because _____.

With what I learn, I plan to _____.

I hope my research will _____.

Once you have your points down, consider and prepare facts, figures, and anecdotes to support your points. Have printed materials to support your information whenever possible in order to help the reporter minimize errors. If time allows, offer to email the reporter printed information in advance of the interview.

If you are quoted in an official news release, journalists will expect you to be available for further comments or questions. Expect media calls.

What to wear, and what *not* to wear

Believe it or not, this is an important aspect of ensuring a successful interview. You'll feel better and more confident if you're dressed appropriately.

For television interviews, plan to wear solid-colour clothing. Stripes, plaids, zigzags, polka dots or other designs can cause problems with TV images. And **DO NOT** wear green—in many studios, "green screens" are now the norm and any green you are wearing will appear invisible to the viewing audience.

Don't wear "noisy" jewelry (it'll make noise near a microphone, or a charm bracelet can make a terrible noise on a desk top when you're trying to be heard (mics are more sensitive than we are)).

Look in a mirror, if possible, prior to going on camera. The reporter may not tell you that your hair is out of place or if your collar is folded over.