

Tips for Effective Interviews

Taken from the Union of Concerned Scientists, web seminar "How Scientists Can Work Effectively with the Media" based on the book "A Scientists Guide to Talking with the Media"

1. Do your homework: Before every interview, ask the reporter these questions:
 - What is the topic of the story?
 - What is the reporter's angle?
 - When is his or her deadline?
 - If the interview is for television or radio, will it be live, recorded live but played later, or edited?
 - When and where will the interview take place?
 - Who are the reporters' other sources?
2. Interview when you're ready: Even if the reporter is on a deadline, ask if you can talk in 10 minutes so you can prepare your main messages and sound bites.
3. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat: Unless you are on live radio or TV, every interview is edited. Take control of how you are edited by driving home your main points.
4. If you stray off course, bridge back to main message
5. End interview on your terms.

"Many reporters are willing to go over passages, especially technical passages, to ensure accuracy."

– Edie Lau, Science Reporter, Sacramento Bee

6. Never speak off the record. (Interviewers are taught to wait for after the formal interview—that's when the real tidbits come out. SMB)
7. Never guess.
8. Emphasize qualifications.
9. Don't get angry.
10. Follow up if a story comes out badly. (Follow up and acknowledge the story if it comes out well. SMB)