

MEDIA TRAINING TIPSHEET

Key takeaways for quick reference



Interview prep:

- Create 2-3 talking points, one bottom line
- Identify supporting examples, analogies, data and personal experience
- Simplify your answers
- Anticipate hard questions and prepare answers for them

DOs:

- Consider opening with a 90-second overview of your expertise and thoughts
- Ask the reporter to clarify a confusing question
- Be friendly, open and respectful
- Use a metaphor to paint a picture
- Be honest if you don't have an answer; you can always follow up with an e-mail
- Say how you want to be identified
- Ask to repeat an answer asked earlier in the interview

DON'Ts:

- Use acronyms and jargon
- Say things "off the record"
- Ask to read the story before it's published
- Stray too far from your expertise
- Say "no comment" (Try: "That's not a question I can answer.")
- Repeat a negative framing in your answer

When questions get tough:

- Maintain control and composure
- Don't be defensive
- You do not need to answer hypotheticals – "I can't speculate."
- Be honest if you don't know the answer
- You can reframe questions
- Always feel free to contact communications for help vetting the interview request!

Traps to avoid:

- In response to leading questions: “Your assumption isn’t true,” then, state a key point
- The uncomfortable silence. Make your point, then stop talking. “Did you have any other questions?”
- The non-question. “Did you have a specific question?”

When you can’t quite answer:

- “I can’t predict the future, but I can tell you what happened in the past.”
- “I’m not in a position to make specific recommendations, but I can tell you some policy options...”
- “I can’t answer that definitively at this point, but I can tell you how to minimize risk..”

Bridging to your messages:

- “I think what you’re really asking is...”
- “That speaks to a bigger point...”
- “Let me put that in perspective...”
- “The real issue here is...”
- “I don’t know about that, but what I do know is...”
- “What’s important to remember is...”
- “Just the opposite is true...”
- “That’s false...”

At the end of the interview:

- “The most important thing to remember is...”
- “The real issue is...”
- “We’ve talked about a lot today, but it boils down to three things...”
- “Let me make one thing perfectly clear...”

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