**Best Practices for Talking to Media**

1. **What’s the point?** *First, it is important to understand what reporters are looking for and how they operate.*

A journalist is looking for…

* Topical, interesting information that’s relevant to their readers / viewers / listeners
* Experts and sources that add credibility to their reporting
* Condensed takeaways that will excite their readers
* Compelling visuals and audio

A journalist’s process:

* Identify stories from abstracts, press releases, social media, tip sheets, blogs, newswires, expert databases
* Pitch a story to an editor
* Write the story on a deadline

What this means for you:

* A hook is a must!
* You’re an expert—but they aren’t. Break it down. Explain why it matters to your average person.
* Prompt replies improve your chances for coverage.

1. **What’s your plan?** *So maybe you got a media request. How should you handle that? Who should be involved, who’s the target audience, and what do you need?*

Do some research:

* Know your organization’s media protocol: who should be looped in?
* Vet the journalist: look them up and find stories they have written.
* Determine if you’re comfortable contributing to their article or providing resources.
* Acknowledge their request promptly.
* Find out their deadline, outlet, and audience.
* What is the interview format?
  + Email, phone, in person, Zoom, etc.?
  + Will the interview be live? Will it be recorded?

1. **How to prepare:** *Outline talking points, gather multimedia, show relevance and passion, and follow up!*

Gather materials:

* Make a concise list of your talking points, focusing on the impact and real-world implications.
* Consider ways to address common sticking points or myths / misconceptions in your research.
* Get a high-resolution version of the best multimedia.
* Choose your language based on the audience, avoiding jargon.
* Alert your organization’s press officer & consider having them join you for the interview (or help you prepare).

During the interview:

* For email interviews, have someone review your answers.
* For phone / in-person / Zoom interviews, ask to restart your answers if you stumble.
* Be clear about the reporter’s questions. Repeat them back if necessary.
* Answer within your knowledge. If you don’t know the answer, offer to find out and respond later.
* You don’t have to answer every question.
* Bridge back to your talking points.
* Be courteous. Be thoughtful. Be passionate about your work!

Follow up:

* Send questions and requests the day after the interview.
* Ask for copy / link after publication.
* Understand that most journalists will not share their work with you before publication.

**Talking to Media Checklist**

* Loop in your organization’s press officer or media team
* Vet the journalist and read some of their work
* Acknowledge their request promptly
* Find out their deadline, outlet, and audience
* Confirm the interview format
* Determine your key talking points—they should communicate the impact and real-world applications
* Choose your language based on the audience. Avoid technical jargon.
* **Practice describing your work in plain language.**
* **Prepare examples and helpful analogies.**
* **Share your passion for the research.**
* Prepare multimedia: high-resolution images, sound files, video clips
* Follow up after the interview