

# Preparing for a media interview

Cultured.Fit

Interviews are opportunities to put a face to research, correct misconceptions, and engage in a conversation with the public.

## Before the interview

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### Know your audience

What is the news outlet or TV show?  
Who reads, listens to, or watches it?

### Know your journalist

You can even ask them what they want to know. What will the interview focus on?  
What angles have previous pieces taken?

### Distill your message

Decide on 1-3 main points you want to get across and how you will present them.

### Identify your story

What's surprising, exciting, difficult, or upsetting about your subject?

### Prepare vivid examples

Back up each of your main ideas with examples, stories, metaphors, quotes.

### Why is this important?

Answer the "so what?" question.  
Why should the listener care about it?  
Why do *you* care about it?

### Anticipate tough questions

Every field has parts that make some people uncomfortable. Are you doing research on animals? What are you doing with my personal information? Are you going to create a black hole?

They are often asking: can I trust you?  
Treat tough questions as a request for information, and an opportunity.

## During the interview

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### Be warm and conversational

Channel a conversation with a friend.  
Connect with the interviewer. Don't be afraid to show energy, enthusiasm, and emotional investment.

### Slow down for important ideas

Don't rush, and don't be afraid to repeat yourself.

### Make sure to hit your main points

If you need to, bring the conversation back:  
"What I think is important is..."

### Flag your main points

"The important thing is..."  
"The thing to remember is..."

### Answer in complete sentences that repeat the question

This allows your quotes to stand alone.  
**Q:** Why is this research important?  
**A:** This research is important because it will prevent blindness in developing countries.

### You are always on camera

When the interviewer is asking a question, keep eye contact. Avoid rocking, fidgeting, sighing.

## After the interview

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Help the reporter – follow up with any resources that came up, or answer questions they might have.

### Pitch your story with newsworthy features

When contacting journalists proactively, it helps to keep in mind what they're looking for. You don't have to force your story into categories, but consider which elements you can highlight.

#### Proximity

Is it local? Television needs sound and pictures. If the story is outside the station's viewing area, it better be good. Travel time is a big consideration.

#### Prominence

Does the story involve a well-known person, place, or organization?

#### Impact

How does the story affect the local community?

#### Timeliness

Is it happening now? Is it new? Yesterday's news isn't worth repeating unless there's a way to advance the story.

#### Conflict and controversy

Are there at least two opposing sides? An element of surprise?

#### Human interest

It may not be the most important story, but perhaps it's the most interesting or unusual.