

Working with reporters

-When possible, ask in advance who the reporter is, what publication or broadcast station he or she works for, and what subject will be discussed so that you can anticipate what will be asked and what you want to say.

-Welcome reporters who tape their interviews. This will insure that you are quoted accurately. It will free the reporter from taking verbatim notes so that closer attention can be paid to what you are saying.

-State your conclusion first, then back it up with facts. The most important thing you have to say—the “point” of your story—should be the first thing you say in response to a question. Reporters (and editors) tend to lop off quotes if the story is too long, and some reporters fall behind in their note-taking.

-Don't hesitate to state your main point more than once during the interview. You may want to preface it by saying, “I would like to emphasize ...” or “The important thing to remember is ...”

-Look at every question from the public's point of view before you answer it.

-Avoid unfamiliar vocabulary. If an answer must be technical to be accurate, also provide an appropriate analogy. Speak in terms that are meaningful.

Radio interview tips

-Speak in a conversational tone and not like you're reading.

-Get to the point quickly, speaking in short sentences; good rule of thumb is one thought per sentence (this produces the best sound bites that will get your intended message across).

-Try to say “University of Houston” at least three times throughout the course of the interview where appropriate; this gives us a better chance of getting it on the final on-air story at least once when they get to the editing process for the story.

-If the interview is recorded and not live, you get “do-overs” if you get tongue tied.

Explaining technical subjects in a non-technical manner

-Use analogies and examples for complex concepts.

-Keep in mind your audience: the general public.

-With technical topics, speak to an eighth-grader level.

-Define any highly technical words you might use, but try to avoid jargon as best as possible.

-Avoid unfamiliar vocabulary.