Tips for Science Interviews

Before the Interview

Live interviews:
• Ask: Who is the host? Who is the audience?
• Be able to summarize your main points in a few clear sentences.
• Have stories, anecdotes and metaphors ready.
• Practice using a smart phone to record yourself speaking slowly and clearly. Are you easy to hear and understand?
• For video, practice speaking in front of a mirror. Be aware of any strange faces you’re making.

Recorded interviews:
• Ask: Who is the host? Who is the audience?
• Be able to summarize your main points in a few clear sentences.
• Have stories, anecdotes and metaphors ready.

Transcribed interviews:
• If you need a minute to prepare, ask to call back.
• Ask: Who is the interviewer? Who is the audience? Where will the story appear?
• Be able to summarize your main points in a few clear sentences.
• Have stories, anecdotes and metaphors ready.

During the Interview

Live interviews:
• Speak slowly and enunciate.
• Smile and gesture when you talk.
• Be yourself.
• If you mess up, don’t get upset or flustered! Keep going and do the best you can.

Video
• Wear business casual clothes (perhaps logo wear) with simple makeup and jewelry. Avoid striped shirts and ties.
• Sit or stand up straight.

Radio
• Use a quiet room.
• Talk on a landline phone.
• Put a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door.
• Turn off your cell phone.
• Have your notes in front of you.
• Sit or stand up straight. (It comes through on audio!)
• Smile and gesture when you talk. (This does, too.)

Recorded interviews:
• If you mess up, ask to start again.

Transcribed interviews:
• If you need a minute to prepare, ask to call back.
• Ask: Who is the interviewer? Who is the audience? Where will the story appear? What’s their deadline?
• Be able to summarize your main points in a few clear sentences.
• Have stories, anecdotes and metaphors ready.
• Think of other sources.

What to Say After the Interview

• Offer to give more information or clarity if needed after an interview.
• If something is factually wrong in a printed story, bring it to their attention. Otherwise, let it go.
• Offer to be a resource for future stories/science topics.
PREPARE!

What do we know (background/context of what is known about your research)?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What’s new (what about your research findings is different/unusual/surprising/validating)?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Why does it matter (what’s the human dimension, impact on people, effect on society)?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What are one or two anecdotes from the research experience that might be interesting? Or what are some metaphors that help convey your research?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Insider Tip!

What to Say if You Don’t Know the Answer?

• “I don’t know the answer to your question, but I can find out and get back to you soon.”

• “I don’t know, but I can put you in touch with someone who does.”

• “That’s beyond my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is…”

• DO NOT say “no comment.”