

MORE WOMEN IN RESEARCH

'Learn and lead together'



***How to step into
the Spotlight: Tips
on Engaging
Journalists***

Owning Your Spotlight

How to Connect to the Media:

- Share your relevant research articles directly with media Editors
- Contact the press office linked to your institution
- Develop an online presence through frequent posting on social media about your work

Communicating With A Journalist On Social Media

When contacted by a journalist on social media, it is important that you evaluate their credentials and ensure that they are who they claim to be. Take the following steps as a precaution:

- Do NOT click on any links they send you until you verify their identity and intention in contacting you
- NEVER agree to pay for any coverage, no matter how good it may seem
- If they have not provided them, ask for their name and who they write/produce content for. If they are freelance journalists, they should make that clear and let you know who they are hoping to produce the content for
- Click through to their profile to check their bio to see if it reflects the information about themselves that they have given you
- Look through their social media feed to check to see if they have shared previous published pieces of content that they have contributed to
- Google their name to ensure they are previously published, and then include the publication/media house they represent in your second Google search
- Once you have verified their credentials, then you can ask for some clarifying information on the nature of the interview with the journalist including: the purpose of the piece, the proposed audience, the deadline, and the way in which the interview will take place

“On The Record”

The entire interview, from the moment you answer the phone or enter the room until you hang up or leave (and sometimes beyond) is “on the record” unless you say otherwise ahead of time. This means that journalists may quote anything you say for a story. In short:

- On the record: Anything the source says can be published. The source can be quoted by name.
- Off the record: The journalist cannot publish the information.
- On background/not for attribution: The journalist can publish the information without the source’s name (anonymous). The journalist can use the information but with the source’s title or job description only, not the source’s name.

To be safe, it is best practice to always assume that you are on the record.

How To Practise For An Interview

The best way to become proficient in anything is to practise and gain experience over time. Always prepare your main messages - the two or three points that you want a journalist to take away from your discussion - before any interview. People can sometimes draw different conclusions from research (scientific) results. When preparing your messages ahead of time, think about ways someone could inadvertently misinterpret your results or draw false conclusions, and revise your messages accordingly.

Some scientific topics can be controversial, so when preparing your main messages, think about parts of those messages that might be contentious and how you would respond to questions about them. And remember: You don't have to respond to anything you do not want to.

Once you have prepared your messages, practise the interview with someone who does not have a research (science) background, such as a friend or family member. This will help minimise your chances of being caught off guard and ensure you are explaining the research in clear, understandable terms.

While at that, have the other person ask you basic or obvious questions and practice giving your answers. Then ask the person for feedback. Were you clear and concise? Were you eloquent, or did you stumble over your words? Were there any parts of your science your friend did not understand? Do they comprehend your message? Were any parts of your results misinterpreted?



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