

Media Do's and Don'ts

Do	Don't
<p>Tell the truth. Know your facts. Be able to say where you got them.</p> <p>Say, "I don't know, but I'll find out." Don't make stuff up and be reliable in your follow-up.</p> <p>Be clear about what is fact and what is opinion. Make that clear when you don't have sources to back up what you think to be true. "My experience leads me to believe that...."</p> <p>Speak in soundbites. Speak in clear, concise messages. Reporters have only a few seconds or a few lines of print for your statement.</p> <p>Stay on message. Know what points you want to get across and repeat them again and again.</p> <p>Respect a reporter's deadline. Help a reporter meet the deadline by responding quickly to requests and making information easy to find.</p> <p>Get to know your local media. Learn if a certain reporter is assigned to your community or issue. Introduce yourself. Send him or her information even when you don't expect a story.</p> <p>Tell stories – make issues personal. Put a human face or perspective on issues. Tell how an issue affects you personally.</p> <p>Use words and numbers that paint a picture. Make information memorable. "That bill has enough grease to slip right through your hands like a fish on a cold morning."</p> <p>Always appear more reasonable than your opponent. No whining. No name calling. Take the high road.</p> <p>Provide good materials. Give reporters a copy of all statements made at a press conference and background materials about the issue.</p>	<p>Don't assume reporters understand your issue. Always be clear about who you are and what you represent. Don't depend on reporters to understand the background of your issue.</p> <p>Don't get pulled off message. Don't get distracted by responding directly to questions that drag you off message. Pause. Think. Then re-state your message.</p> <p>Don't cry wolf. Don't call a news event if you don't have something newsworthy or if you aren't well prepared. Otherwise you'll have a harder time the next time.</p> <p>Don't wait until you have to have front-page news before working to get media coverage. It is important that our events and meetings be reported on so the public is aware of the group's efforts. Take advantage of community calendars and public service announcements.</p> <p>Don't make a reporter do all the work. Most major papers and tv stations write their own stories. Smaller papers and radio stations rely more on press releases – so be sure to provide them.</p> <p>Don't be intimidated. It is easy to become unsettled when there is a microphone in front of you. Practice with friends before a press event.</p> <p>Don't speak out on things that are not on your group's agenda. If you are a spokesperson for a group, you have a special responsibility to represent that group's positions.</p> <p>Don't give up. You are competing with dozens of other stories. Whether your event gets covered depends in part on the other events of the day. Meet with editors and reporters if you feel you are not getting fair coverage, but don't give up.</p>