

# Talking to the Media

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# Interviews in media practice

- Central place of oral communication
  - Media increasingly “conversational”
- High value for direct speech
- Email interviews no substitute

# Functions of interview

- collection of facts
- explanation of concepts or processes
- background information and perspective on current topics
- personal information

# Functions of interview

- interpretation of new results
- context of scientific information
- confirmation of journalist's judgement
- examining (and promoting) controversy

# Media views and researcher views

- Different needs
- Different ideas of accuracy
- Different ideas of balance

BUT

- Co-existence essential
- Negotiation possible

# Key is good preparation

- Researcher needs to enter interviewer's world just as interviewer needs to enter researcher's world
- Recognise media constraints
- Focus on opportunities rather than obstacles

# Participants' experiences

- What interactions have you had with media?
  - Own and colleagues'
  - Contexts of interactions
  - Types of media encountered

# Settings of interview

- face-to-face at place of work (print, radio or TV)
- on the phone (print)
- on the phone (live or recorded, radio)
- in studio (live or recorded, radio or TV)



# Response to interview request

- Why me?
- Who else?
- What does the journalist already know?
- What is the journalist's interest?
- Where? When?
- Am I ready?
  - Take time

# Preparing for interview

- What story do I tell?
- What are my choices?
- What will media understand, appreciate?

# Preparing for interview

- What is the essential technical detail?
- Can I explain it to a friend?
- What are my main points?

# Things to avoid

- Don't expect questions in advance
- Don't try to make friends with interviewer
- Don't pick an argument with interviewer

# Things to avoid

- Don't say anything you're not willing to be questioned on
- Don't say 'no comment'
- Don't just keep talking ...

# Things to focus on

- Do tell a story
- Do use examples
- Do answer in sentences
- Do keep focus on audience
- Do restate key points

# Sample interviews for review

- Interview on dark matter ([Guardian Science Weekly](#))
- Interview on “climate change velocity” ([Science magazine podcast](#))

# Sample interviews for review

- Interview on production of stem cell ([BBC News](#))
- Interview on Cern search for Higgs boson ([Scibernia podcast](#))



# Practical preparation

- Form groups of 3-4
- Select one for interview
- ‘Interview’ chosen candidate
- Anticipate difficult questions
- Test clarity of answers
- Give note to trainer on interviewee – name, institution and subject

# Review of interview

- Self-review by trainees
- Review by peer groups
- Summary by trainer