

FAQs: Handling Media Questions

This handout provides quick responses to tough questions you may face when working with the media. Use it as a confidence booster and a reference guide before interviews.

About the Reporters or Media

What if the reporter twists my words? How can I protect myself?

That's why we prepare clear talking points and use short, simple sentences. The simpler and more direct your answers are, the harder they are to twist. If something is misquoted, follow up professionally to request a correction.

What if I don't know the answer?

It's okay to say you don't know. A good response is: "I don't have that information right now, but I'll get it to you after the interview." This builds trust.

What if a reporter is aggressive or hostile?

Stay calm, don't argue, and keep bridging back to your message. Reporters are doing their job — your job is to stay professional and stick to your talking points.

Can I go off the record?

Assume everything you say is on record. If you don't want it printed, don't say it.

What if the reporter asks me about something confidential or ongoing litigation?

Never share details you can't. Instead, acknowledge the question and redirect: "I can't speak to ongoing litigation, but what I can tell you is..." and return to your key message.

How do I handle questions outside my expertise?

Don't guess. Redirect to your area of expertise or refer the reporter to the right person. For example: "That's a question better answered by our public health team, but what I can share is..."

What if I freeze during the interview?

It happens! Pause, take a breath, and use a bridging statement to re-center. For example: "That's a great question. What's important to know is..." gives you time to regroup.

Can I ever refuse to do an interview?

If you're not comfortable, you should loop in your Communications team. But remember, staying silent can sometimes make things worse. Having a prepared response helps you stay in control.

"What if I don't trust the media outlet that's calling me?"

Treat all media with professionalism. Stick to your talking points, and you'll keep control of your message no matter the outlet.

About Interviews & Messaging

"What if I say the wrong thing and it blows up?"

Everyone makes mistakes and if it does happen you'll need to do the following:

- **Don't ignore it:** Silence often makes the issue grow. Address it quickly and professionally.
- **Acknowledge the mistake (without repeating the negative).**
Example: Instead of saying "*I didn't mean we're failing*", say "*I misspoke, what I should have said is that our team is making progress and remains committed to solutions.*"
- **Clarify your message.**
Restate your key points clearly so the public and reporters know exactly what you stand by.

- **Work with your Communications team.**

They can help issue a statement, coordinate with reporters, and make sure your clarification is seen.

- **Stay consistent.**

In follow-up interviews, stick to your talking points and avoid rehashing the mistake. Consistency rebuilds credibility.

Risk & Control

What if the reporter keeps pressing me on something I can't answer?

That's where bridging statements help. Acknowledge the question, then pivot to what you can share. Don't feel pressured to answer what you shouldn't.

Isn't saying nothing safer than risking a mistake?

Silence can look evasive and allows others to control the narrative. Even a short, clear response like "Safety is our top priority, and here's what we're doing..." is better than no comment.

How do I keep my emotions in check if the reporter is unfair?

Stay calm and professional. Your tone and body language are as important as your words. Preparation gives you confidence to stay composed.