



**Save the Children**

# **Mastering the Media**

COURTESY OF  
Save the Children  
Young People's Press  
Media Prep.

# Knowing the Media

## **You should know what type of interview you will be giving:**

- Know the subject matter and how your interview fits into the bigger picture.
- Ask what you will be speaking about.
- Ask how long the interview will take.
- Where and how your interview will be used. Will they be using your interview on television, radio or print?
- If it's a broadcast interview, when will it air? Is it "live"?

## **Keep in mind:**

- The subject matter. Expect journalists to try to stray from your subject or be prepared that the conversation may not always go your way. The interviewer might try to surprise you with something that happens to be "in the news" that day.
- How long your answers should be, sometimes you will need to give short answers.
- What type of people you will be speaking to.
- How often you want to say your "key points."

## **If you are speaking to a newspaper journalist:**

- You can give much longer answers. There is room for explanation and details.
- Remember to sprinkle your "key points" while you are being interviewed.
- Try to remember to say something "quotable" or "memorable" to the reporter.

## **Broadcast: News/Short Feature/Edited:**

- Think in short and catchy answers.
- Don't forget to include your "key points."
- Try not to use the interviewer's name.
- Try not to say the date and time you are being interviewed. The news you see on television is often recycled and re-used in a 24-hour period.

## **Broadcast: Studio/Satellite/Unedited:**

- Answers can be slightly longer. It's okay to be little more detailed.
- You don't need to say your "key points" in every answer. You can mention them occasionally.
- If the interview isn't very long, it's best to get your messages in fairly early if possible.
- It's okay to use the interviewer's name if you wish.

# **“Bridges”**

**Here are some ideas to link your “key points” to the topic of conversation. That link is called a “bridge.” Below are some examples of “bridges.”**

“Let me add...”

“Another thing to remember is...”

“The point is...”

“More to the point...”

“What we’re talking about here is...”

“The real issue/concern/problem is...”

“What’s important here is...”

“Just as important is...”

“While \_\_\_ is certainly important, don’t forget...”

“Let’s not forget...”

“Our role/job/task is...”

“Our main priority/commitment/goal is...”

“The fact is...”

“The core/gist of the matter is...”

“Good question, but...”

“That’s an interesting question, let me remind you though that...”

# How to Master A Media Interview

## Prepare Yourself:

- Know what the person interviewing you expects and hopes to gain from the interview.
- Focus your “key points” and stick to them. Don’t begin talking about something else.
- Stick to some basic interview do’s and don’ts.

## Unwritten Rules:

- Consider any conversation with a journalist an interview.
- Once you’ve given something away...don’t expect to get it back.
- Always assume a journalist will print anything you say.
- For radio or television, always assume your microphone or camera is on.

## Different Types of Interviews:

- **Telephone** – print and radio reporters often do their interviews over the telephone.
- **One on one** – a face-to-face interview. These can be scheduled or impromptu.
- **The News Conference** – a scheduled, usually orderly group interview.
- **The Scrum** – a rugby term for when you’re surrounded by reporters for an interview.
- **Panel Interview** – a broadcast interview when two or more people are interviewed by two or more reporters or hosts. A variation is the **Phone-in** interview.
- **Satellite Interview** – also known as a “double-ender”, “two-ended interview” or “talkback” – when the interviewer and interviewee are not together. Questions and answers are heard through earpieces. The people do not see one another.
- **The Ambush** – a “60 Minutes” style confrontation that usually comes after repeated requests for a regular interview.

## Set up:

- Prepare ahead of time.
- Ask about the type and length of interview you’ll be doing.
- Be aware of the “pre-interview”.
- Don’t ask for interview questions ahead of time or try to restrict topics.
- Ask about the subject areas to be discussed and the “big picture”.
- **Make sure reporter’s deadlines are respected.**
- **Building relationships with the media is important.**

**In any interview, for print or broadcast, live or recorded, it’s important to remember your “key points.” This is what the media wants. And, it’s also to your advantage.**

## Your Message:

Take the **time to prepare** for an interview. It's time well invested.

- Know what you want to say ahead of time.
- Prepare **three main "key points."** These are things you want to clearly get across to the person interviewing you. Too many messages might get **confusing**.
- **Always think about the person or people you will be speaking to.**
- **Don't memorize** what you are going to say. It doesn't sound natural.
- Use key words and phrases to prepare yourself.
- Try to answer all the questions.
- **Techniques for returning to your message.** ("bridges")

## Important Rules:

1. **Avoid confusing terms or words.** Beware of short forms or acronyms.  
**Example: UNGASS – United Nations General Assembly Special Session, CRC-Convention on the Rights of the Child**
2. **Translate information.** Try to help people understand difficult concepts.
3. **Don't repeat the negative** if you're responding to a critical question. Repeating the interviewer's words could be damaging.

### Example:

*Question:*

*Isn't your hope that world leaders will place children's rights on their national agenda unrealistic?*

Answer:

No, it's not unrealistic. We believe that world leaders need to...

### Better Answer:

**We believe that world leaders have the opportunity...**

**\*\*Exception: If the negative is a stereotype you wish to correct, you may want to repeat it and then address it correctly.**

4. **Correct any misinformation** in the question **before** you answer it.

### Example:

*Question:*

*I understand that 200 countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child...?*

Answer:

**Actually, 191 member states have signed...**

**5. Never say “no comment.”** It sounds as though you are trying to hide something.

**6. Avoid rumours, gossip and lying.** It's far better to stick to the facts.

Whenever you do an interview, tape it. It's a great way to see how you look on camera and for you to have a copy of what you really did say. You never know when you may need it later.

## **Presentation:**

Most importantly, be yourself. **Be natural.** If you appear artificial, people won't believe what you are trying to say.

- **Never read your comments even on radio when you think no one can see you.**
- Vary the way you say things. But make sure it's natural.
- Be enthusiastic and happy if you feel you can.
- NEVER lose your temper or get angry with the interviewer.
- **Don't memorize what you are going to say. You will appear as if you have practiced what you are trying to say.**

## **Appearance is very important for television:**

- **Try to eliminate any distractions.**
- Avoid flashy colours, prints, large jewellery and unusual hairstyles.
- Try to appear as though you are interested.
- Always look at the person asking the questions when you can.
- Avoid sitting behind a desk because it distances you from the viewers.
- Sit on jacket tails to avoid bunching at the shoulders.
- Make sure you are neatly dressed. You'll appear more confident that way.

## **The Five “Cs” for a Good Interview:**

**Be Clear**

**Be Concise (Short)**

**Be Conversational (Speak as if you are speaking to people you know)**

**Provide Content (Give the journalist something to go on but remember your “key points.”)**

**Be Consistent (Don't change your mind half way through the interview.)**

# Checklist

Questions to ask yourself when rating your interview performance.

	Yes	No
1. Have I thought of all the questions I might be asked?	_____	_____
2. Am I taking every opportunity to say my "key points?"	_____	_____
3. Are my answers suitable to air?	_____	_____
4. Am I being clear?	_____	_____
5. Are my answers short?	_____	_____
6. Am I talking in a friendly way?	_____	_____
7. Am I providing good information?	_____	_____
8. Are my sentences complete?	_____	_____
9. Am I using words or terms people won't understand?	_____	_____
10. Am I sounding natural?	_____	_____
11. Do I sound nervous?	_____	_____
12. Am I reading my answers?	_____	_____
13. Am I speaking in a clear voice?	_____	_____
14. Am I saying negative things?	_____	_____
15. Do I look like I know what I am talking about?	_____	_____
16. Am I using examples to help people understand what I'm saying?	_____	_____
17. Am I using correct facts and figures?	_____	_____
18. Am I memorizing?	_____	_____
19. Am I correcting wrong information in questions before I answer?	_____	_____
20. Have I avoided saying "no comment"?	_____	_____

# Points to Remember

1. Be prepared.
2. Respect your interviewer-be a reliable and credible resource.
3. Talk in personal terms when you can.
4. Bring materials along to support what you are saying.
5. Don't rush. Take your time to give a response.
6. Nothing is **EVER** off the record. If you don't want to see something quoted, then don't say it.
7. Tell the truth. Don't lie, exaggerate or make things up.
8. If you don't know something, tell the journalist you will find out. Get the information and call them back.
9. Never say "no comment."
10. Speak clearly, sit up straight, look at the reporter and project your voice.

## Importantly...

- 11. Never feel forced or pressured to give an interview. If you do not want to be interviewed, it is your right to say NO. Make this clear right from the start that you are not comfortable speaking with the press. The journalists can then try to find someone else to speak to for the interview.**