



**University of
Northern Iowa**
University Relations

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www.uni.edu/ur

Media Interview Tips

When a reporter calls

Contact University Relations (UR) if you are contacted by the media. UR coordinates all university media activity. Check out the media relations resources on the UR site, www.uni.edu/ur (under public relations).

- It's perfectly acceptable to tell the reporter you need a little time to prepare, then return the call as soon as possible.
- Get the reporter's name, media outlet, phone number, email address, topic and deadline.
- Return the call as soon as possible.

Preparation

UR is available for media training. Call 3-6728 to schedule an appointment.

- Write down likely questions and appropriate answers.
- Know the points you wish to make. Develop appropriate messages. (See UR's website for Message Development Worksheet.)
- Ask yourself what is the main point you want to get across?
- Practice responses out loud.

The interview

- Be yourself.
- Tell the truth.
- Show passion, empathy and sincerity about the topic.

- Answer the question, move on to important points you want to make and offer a supporting point to strengthen your message.
- Remember, you become the message.
- “No comment” is never an appropriate response. If you can’t comment, explain why (litigation, confidential, etc.)
- There is no such thing as “off the record.”
- Make your points at the beginning. Repeat them at the end.
- Less is more.
- Use quotable quotes - be illustrative and pithy.
- Use flagging statements - “the point I’d like to make...”
- Be a storyteller.
- Avoid jargon. Speak so the lay person can understand.
- Always support your point with facts, statistics or personal experience.
- Don’t repeat negative language or inaccurate information.
- Don’t answer hypothetical questions.
- If you don’t know the answer, say so and find someone who does.
- Interviews are short. You only get a few minutes to share your expertise.
- Don’t ask to approve the story before it’s published or broadcast.
- If a reporter ambushes you with a hostile interview or unexpected line of questioning, refer back to the original topic. “I’m prepared for topic A, not topic B at this time.”
- Consider the two questions you don’t want to be asked - then think about how you will answer them.

The television interview

- Darker clothes look best.
- When interviewing outdoors, don’t wear sunglasses.
- Look directly at the reporter, not at the camera.
- Mind your facial expressions; smile and nod at only the appropriate moments.
- Be natural. Don’t fidget or swivel in your chair.
- Don’t use hand gestures.
- Don’t chew gum.
- Silence is better than “ummm.”