



School of  
Public Health

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

# In the News: Getting Ready

---



ROMASH  
COMMUNICATIONS

# Pre-game: Before your interview

## Do you know?

- Who is the reporter? What expertise? History? Prior reporting?
- Why is this reporter reaching out to you? What role do they expect you to fill? Who else is being interviewed?
- How much time devoted to this interview?
- What is the story? Does this reporter already have a conclusion to prove or, in search of that conclusion?
- When will this story be published/broadcast?
- Where will this story be published/broadcast?

# Pre-game: Before your interview

## What's your headline?

- If you were writing the story, what's the headline you'd write?
- What is the most important point you want to communicate?
- Where are potential pitfalls/traps/challenges to your goals?

# Pre-game: Before your interview

## What questions will you be asked?

## How will you answer?

- Specifically define what questions you may be asked.
- Understand where you may be challenged.

# Pre-game: Before your interview

## What's your message?

### *def.* MESSAGE [mê-s-íj]

A limited body of truthful information which is consistently conveyed by... an organization to provide the persuasive reasons for an audience to choose and act on behalf of their (agenda).

#### Limited

- An effective message is concise, 25 words or less

#### Truthful

- An effective message is accurate and clear

#### Consistent

- An effective message is consistently conveyed

#### Persuasive

- An effective message is convincing

#### Act

- An effective message provokes action

#### Values

- An effective message speaks to values

# In the game:

## Remember your audience

- Talk to the people who will see or hear your story; they're more important than the reporter interviewing you.
- Be conversational, imagine you're a guest at the dinner table or in the living room.
- Keep your language simple, and easy to understand.

# In the game:

## Deliver your message

- Go into the interview with one or two key points you want to make; stick with them.
- First impressions count: make your first words the most important, particularly on broadcast interviews.
- Frame your answers:
  - Strong, affirmative, declarative opening statement.
  - Fact(s) supporting
  - Strong conclusion reinforcing opening, key message

# In the game:

## Deliver your message

- **Use facts and details to support (not overwhelm) your message**  
When in doubt, choose anecdote over analysis
- **The rule of threes**  
“Government of the people, by the people, for the people”
- **Contrast and compare**  
“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”
- **Lead**  
“The most important point is...”
- **Stay ‘on’ message:** Repetition is everything



# In the game:

## Strong offense, effective defense

- Use your words, don't allow interviewer to put words into your mouth.
- Don't repeat negatives, or charges made against you or your cause.
- Avoid "off the record"
- When you don't know something, don't fake it.
- No jokes.
- No temper.

In the game:

Agree on definitions & rules of engagement

**On the record**: All that is said can be quoted and attributed.

**Off the record**: Information is provided to provide a confidential explanation, not for publication or broadcast.

**Not for attribution**: what is said can be reported, but not attributed.

**Recording**: On phone or online (Zoom), reporters must inform you interview is being recorded. It is in your best interest to also record.

# In the game: Interview “DON'Ts”

**DON'T** “over answer.” When you’ve delivered your message, stop.

**DON'T** repeat or accept a negative when presented as part of a question.

*“No, I don’t beat my dog.” “The way I see it...”*

**DON'T** be provoked. Keep cool. If a interviewer makes you mad, don’t show it.

**DON'T** make jokes, you’re a lawyer, not a comedian.

**DON'T** fake it. When you don’t know an answer, say so.

**DON'T** go off the record when a camera or recording device is running.

**DON'T** assume a microphone is ever off.

# In the game: Interview “DON'Ts”

**DON'T** speculate when asked to predict the future or address a hypothetical

**DON'T** answer irrelevant questions with no bearing on your agenda, your area of expertise, or the stated focus of the interview

**DON'T** accept a loaded premise that is negative or incorrect simply because it is presented as a question.

**DON'T** make choices you don't have to, i.e. when asked to choose between two or more bad options.

**DON'T** get drawn into a fight with an absent adversary.

# In the game: Blocking & Bridging

## Blocking & Bridging

Deftly avoiding an  
unwelcome or  
unproductive question

Moving the discussion  
from unfriendly to  
friendly territory

Examples:

- “The way I see it is.....”
- “I think what you’re really asking is...”
- “That speaks to a bigger point...”
- “What’s really at issue here is..”

# In the game:

## Blocking & Bridging

- Only “block” a question completely when there is good reason to do so.
- There’s almost never a reason for “no comment” or “I can’t answer that.”
- Every question is an opportunity to deliver your message.

# Post game: Review

- Any errors in facts? Seek correction(s)
- Any misrepresentation in translation? Seek clarification.
- Assess for sharing
  - Good for sharing with key audiences? Across social platforms? Website? Internal audiences?
- Any follow-up?

# IN SUMMARY

## **PRE-GAME:**

Know reporter, audience, purpose

Define message, ready answers

## **IN THE GAME:**

Deliver your message

Remember “Dos & Don’ts”

Block & Bridge

## **POST GAME:**

Correct, if needed

Share

Follow up