

If a journalist calls you direct: never launch straight into an interview, as you won't have had time to prepare what you want to say. Ask the journalist what they're calling about and note their contact details – then contact your press office if you have one, or arrange a time to call back.

Preparation is essential: make sure you prepare as thoroughly as you would for a broadcast encounter and don't be lulled into a sense of false security just because you're not 'on air': print interviews are just as difficult, if not more so. Create opportunities to reach your key messages and have plenty of examples to help bring the interview to life.

Have someone with you: if possible, arrange for someone else to sit in on the interview – for example a member of your press office team or a colleague. They can take notes and ensure any additional information is provided.

Don't expect to see questions in advance: you're unlikely to receive a set of questions beforehand, but make sure you know what areas the journalist wants to cover so you can prepare what you want to say.

Have 360 degree vision: once you know the subject of the interview, you must do your homework. Research what others are saying on the subject, what your company or organisation has said, and even what you have said in the past. Then check again just before the interview to make sure nothing has changed.

A REMINDER CARD
PRINT INTERVIEWS

Don't read from notes: just because you're not 'on air' don't fall back on written notes – and never have your key messages on display. You need to engage the interviewer just as you would on radio or TV. When being interviewed over the phone, have your key messages and proof points to hand if you need them – but avoid reading from a script as you won't sound natural.

Never go "off the record": if a journalist asks you to do so, politely but firmly decline and make it clear that everything you say is on the record and can be attributed to you.

Don't demand copy approval: once the interview has finished you're unlikely to see it before publication. Asking to do so isn't good practice and never demand to see it ahead of time, as journalists guard their editorial independence jealously.

Treat all journalists equally: today's junior journalists are tomorrow's senior correspondents and editors. Taking the time to explain complex subjects to junior reporters will be appreciated and you will become a trusted contact.

Be accessible: making yourself available at short notice or out of office hours can help build relationships – but make sure you prepare thoroughly, whatever time of day or night you're being interviewed