

Location: think carefully about the location and never hold a press conference in a public area where you will have to walk away from journalists at the end. Choose a private room with sufficient space and plan your exit carefully – so that spokespeople do not have to walk through the assembled media to leave the room.

Allocate roles: always field the most senior people possible and make sure everyone has a clearly defined role – including any prepared updates they need to deliver and questions they will need to answer.

The Chairperson: appoint a Chairperson whose role is to manage the press conference from start to finish, introducing spokespeople, taking and allocating questions from journalists and bringing it to a close. The Chairperson's role is critical – they must stay in control throughout.

Arrive together: make sure the Chairperson and panel members meet in a private location ahead of the press conference. Then when you're ready and when the media are in attendance, walk into the room together, as a team.

Take control: the Chair must take control from the outset by welcoming the media, thanking them for attending and explaining the agenda – including when journalists will have the opportunity to ask questions.

Work as a team: everyone on the press conference panel has an important part to play, so work as a team and support each other throughout.

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When speaking: engage the audience by looking around the room, not forgetting those at the back. A useful tip is to divide the room into zones, allowing your eyes to rest on each one so as to connect with people there, before moving on.

When not speaking: panel members also have a role to play when not speaking. Look interested and engaged and listen carefully – in case you need to help a colleague out or refer to something they've said later on.

When answering questions: maintain eye contact with the journalist, be confident and use open, positive gestures. Always answer the question if you can, then go further to reach one of your key messages.

Stick to the facts: never guess or speculate and don't feel pressured to say more than you planned to, especially in a crisis.

Draw it to a close: this is normally the role of the Chairperson. Have the confidence to draw the press conference to a close, either at the allocated time or when questions become repetitive.

Don't go back: once the press conference has ended, don't be tempted to answer further questions as you're heading out the door.