



## Do's & Don'ts of Talking to the Media

- **DO keep it simple and speak to values.** The more information you try to fit in, the more likely it is that your message will be muddled and overwhelm the listener. Keep your message simple and don't get bogged down explaining the details. The reporter will ask for the clarification and details that they need.
- **DON'T assume that you are ever 'off the record' and can't be quoted for a story.** Unless the reporter has specifically agreed to take your interview "on background" (meaning they will attribute what you say to an "anonymous source" or 'experienced community activist', etc. in the article), even casual comments can end up as quotes in the newspaper. Don't offer any opinions or criticisms that you wouldn't want to see in print.
- **DO speak in sound bites.** Reporters are looking for a good quote, not a lengthy history. Practice your talking points ahead of time with friends to keep them short, clear and simple.
- **DON'T just answer a question, RESPOND with your key message.** Make sure every answer brings the focus back to your message for maximum impact by responding to the question and bringing it back to your key point.
- **DO remember that image is 90% of the game.** Appear poised and in command. Take a deep breath and ground yourself; try to relax.
- **DO know whom you're talking to.** Do your research before meeting with a journalist. Run a Google search and get a sense of their interests.
- **DON'T forget to get the journalist's contact information.** Follow up with an email and express interest in seeing the story when it is printed. It's okay to send a SHORT additional thought if there is something from the interview you would like to clarify or provide a more succinct quote.
- **DO recommend other sources of information or people to interview.** Share your resources. Providing additional information or contacts is another chance to help shape the story.

## Dos and Don'ts for the New Media of Blogs

New forms of media, like blogs, are becoming more and more important as traditional outlets like newspapers reduce their staff. All of the rules above apply to bloggers as well, but here a few additional things to consider.

- **DO disclose your affiliations.** If you comment on a blog, always disclose your group affiliation. Blogs are self-policing communities, and you will make enemies if you don't practice full-disclosure.
- **DON'T post your press release to a blog.** Bloggers are looking for an inside perspective and don't want to see a press release. You can offer the same information as your press release. Just rewrite it to be a little more conversational.
- **DO provide links to third party sources.** Offering third party sources and links to websites will make you more credible in the blogosphere. Bloggers are more wary of 'spin' so offer them the resources to come to the same conclusions as you.
- **DO maintain the relationship.** Get the direct email of the blogger and email them articles or resources that might be of interest. Link to their blog posts from your website, Facebook or Twitter account, and let them know. They will seek you out in the future for stories.

