



Do you answer a journalist's questions? Do you schedule an interview?

Consider this guide before being the star of a malicious editorial piece.

If contacted by a reporter, keep in mind:

- Most journalists aren't out to make you look bad.
- Most journalists don't approach a story with a lot of preconceptions. They might start with a premise, but most will go where the story leads, not vice versa.
- Most journalists don't want to get the story wrong.
- You have all the facts. A journalist might go to a source who doesn't have your best interest in mind after denying them an interview.

1) **Always postpone an interview**, never answer questions over the phone.

- "Unfortunately I'm not available at the moment, but I'd be happy to schedule an interview for later."
- **Get answers to the questions below**, agree upon a time for the interview, and HANG UP.

2) **Consider the following questions** when a journalist makes contact with you. Sort the answers into pros and cons, and weigh the differences.

Note: Get these answers from the journalist. After properly postponing an interview, research the same questions and note the differences. If anything doesn't match, the journalist may be looking to manipulate you.

- **Who** is the journalist? Who have they already contacted? Where are they calling from? Do they have an area of expertise? Also, consider who their audience is.
- **What** do they want? What event or subject provoked their need to reach out? What do they already know about the story? What type of interview for what medium – is it a chat over the phone for print or an interview conducted in front of a camera?
- **When** is the deadline? When does the journalist want to do the interview and when will the story run?
 - Remember: Always push an interview back, never answer questions over the phone, especially to avoid schedule conflicts.
- **Where** do they want to do the interview? In your office, online, or are they requesting a peculiar meeting place?
- **Why** is the media interested in the story and why is the journalist contacting you specifically?
- **How** do they expect me to answer these questions?
 - Never answer hypotheticals with how they want you to answer them. Answer hypothetical questions in confidence, based on facts: "What I DO know is that..." Don't try to predict the future.
 - If any question makes you uncomfortable, reply by citing immovable facts: the law, science, policies, ethics, principles, investigations

3) **Get help from your communications team.**

- Ask someone specializing in communications to weigh the pros and cons for you.
- Communications can help you form key points to keep in mind during the interview. They will insist that you bridge your responses to these key points before answering leading questions.