



Module 7: 13 ways to give a great media interview

1. Don't be afraid to be interesting



Some athletes worry that a journalist will try to trick him or her into giving up a dramatic “scoop.” Not wanting to cause a media controversy, the athlete plays it safe by giving the kind of clichéd, uncontroversial answers popular in hockey post-game interviews. Unfortunately, these responses give the journalist very little to work with.

Unless the journalist is pursuing an angle that makes you uncomfortable, you should view the interview as a collaborative process. If you offer thoughtful, engaging quotes and let your personality shine through, you'll help the journalist write an interesting story that sports fans will want to read. You may even be approached for future interviews.

2. Know what makes you unique



Maybe you collect model trains or participate in cosplay. Maybe your grandmother was a track star or all three of your siblings also play an elite sport. These details can add a fresh element to a reporter's story, but athletes sometimes struggle to identify them. Brainstorm a few unique facts about yourself or ask a teammate or friend if you are having trouble thinking of anything.

3. Keep it brief



The journalist is looking for a short quote or soundbyte, so try to keep your answer as concise as possible.

4. Prepare the answers to common questions beforehand



By thinking about your answers beforehand, you can avoid drawing a blank under the pressure of the interview.

Here are some common ones:

- How did you get involved in your sport?
- Tell me about the competition/event we're at today.
- How do you think your team/a particular athlete played today?
- Why is today's game important?
- What are your predictions for the tournament/game/season?
- How has playing this sport impacted your life?
- How did you get involved in your sport?
- What are your sport goals?
- Who's your biggest hero or mentor?
- What kind of training do you do?
- How do you balance training with school/ having a social life/ family obligations?

5. Look at the reporter, not the camera



6. Only answer questions that you're directly knowledgeable about



Sometimes, reporters will try to ask you questions that are beyond the scope of your knowledge, such as "How do other countries fund your sport?" Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know" or "I'm not the right person to answer that."

7. Stick to your key messages



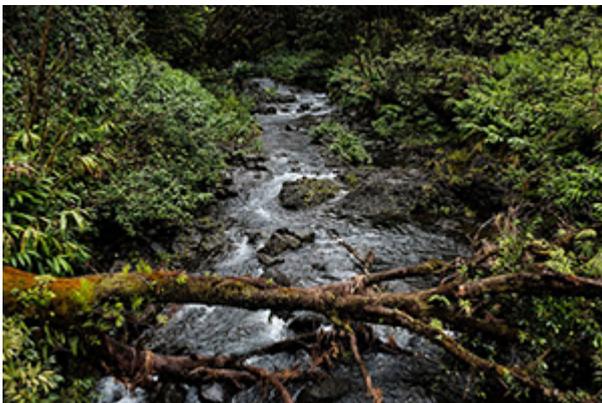
Instead of passively answering the reporter's questions, take an active role in controlling what messages you deliver. Most media-savvy athletes have two or three key messages that they have practiced until they are polished soundbytes. Often, these messages tie back to an athlete's brand or public speaking career. If your sport is obscure, your key messages may also involve "selling" your sport to the public.

8. Use bridges to get the conversation on track



Sometimes, a reporter will be hung-up on a topic that you don't want to discuss. For example, Paralympic athletes sometimes find that a reporter is fixated on the story of how he or she acquired a disability. To switch the conversation back to your key messages, create a bridge between one topic and the next. For example, if a reporter asks, "Tell me about your car accident," you could say, "I sustained a spinal cord injury in a car accident 1997 and became an incomplete quadriplegic. Luckily, I discovered wheelchair rugby in 2000 and it's totally changed my life." This switches the conversation from the car accident back to wheelchair rugby in a polite way.

9. Let the conversation flow naturally



A good interview is a balancing act. On one hand, being prepared with key messages and the answers to a few common questions can improve the quality of your responses. Too much preparation, however, can make you sound robotic or stilted. The best interviews happen when you relax and engage with the journalist in conversation.

10. Stop. Breathe. Relax. Think. Speak



Before responding to a question, take time to gather your thoughts.

11. Project confidence



Remember that you've got something valuable to say. Say it with confidence. Sit up straight, keep your shoulders back, and try to avoid 'pause words' like 'uh' or 'um.'

12. Review your interview



Watch the final interview or read the final article and take stock of how you did. How did you come across? What did you do well? What would you like to change for next time?

13. Know your reporter



Before an interview with an unfamiliar reporter, do a quick online search for his or her last few articles to get a sense of any common topics or themes. Does the reporter write human-interest stories or hard news stories? Does he or she prefer feel-good stories or controversies? Knowing what angle a reporter is likely to take will give you a sense of what questions he or she might ask and help you feel more prepared.

Do you have questions about media interviews? Do you have any tips to share with your fellow athletes or coaches? Get into the conversation by tweeting @ViaSportBC or emailing info@viasportbc.ca.

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