

# Sharing your research through the media

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Effectively communicating to the public through the media is one of the key ways UTM ensures accountability and generates understanding/support of its research mission. If you are expecting to do an interview soon or simply want to be prepared when a reporter calls, the following tips could help.

- [Before you agree to an interview](#)
- [During the interview](#)
- [Assistance with media](#)

## Before you agree to an interview:

Journalists are almost always racing the clock. Return calls promptly, with the understanding that you are never required to do an interview on the spot. Don't be afraid to ask the questions you need to prepare:

- What is your article about?
- Why are you writing this now ie., what is the “news hook” or the reason for the story?
- How much time do you need?
- Who else are you speaking to?
- What is your deadline?
- Each medium has different requirements: For TV or radio, for example, ask: What is the format? Is it live? Will there be a panel and if so, who else is on it?
- Get the reporter's name, contact information and call back at a mutually agreed time (once you're prepared).

## During the interview:

1. Do not tell the reporter how to do his or her job. Reporters know their audience and the requirements of journalistic writing are different, for example, from those of an academic journal.
2. If the reason you are doing media interviews is to help promote a publication or paper, ensure you understand and abide by the journal's embargo requirements.
3. Use language that the layperson will understand. Simple, straightforward explanations, free of jargon, reduce the chance of distortion or error. Explain the significance of your

work to everyday life: what are the implications? Why should someone outside of your field care about this?

4. Researchers are justifiably wary of their results being overstated and creating false hopes. Minimize the dangers by cooperating with the reporter, outlining clearly and concisely the main findings, how they fit into the bigger picture, and the need and direction for future research.
5. Know that everything you say won't be used. Decide what your two or three key points are and make them clearly.
6. Understand that time, space and interest constraints tend to favour stories that emphasize research with practical results, new techniques and surprising phenomena. It is nevertheless important that the public understand the process by which knowledge advances. Use the opportunity to illustrate the process simply and clearly using anecdotes where possible to make it interesting.
7. You won't see the reporter's story before it runs. But do let the reporter know that you are available to answer any further questions or clarify points that may be unclear. Provide a phone number where you can be easily reached to check facts. If you have additional images or video that might help illustrate the story, offer these (provided you have copyright to do so).
8. Treat the interview as a developing relationship. There is no substitute for having a good personal relationship with a reporter specializing in your area based on respect, reliability and credibility.
9. Some media outlets have "beat" reporters who follow particular areas. Like most of us, reporters tend to call back the people they know will help them do their job well.
10. Even if the outlet has a reporter who covers your field, it is important to remember that the reporter does not know as much about your area as you do. Also, he or she may have been given the assignment only an hour ago, so don't be surprised if the reporter seems unprepared. Have patience in clarifying facts and issues that may seem simple to you.
11. Don't be afraid to show your enthusiasm for your work and mention your department and, of course, University of Toronto Mississauga!