



HOW TO BE A MEDIA SPOKESPERSON 2025 GUIDE

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MEDIA = GREAT CONVERSATION

For most people - the key to a strong media performance is **great conversation**.



It's not about crafting "the perfect line" or being an encyclopedia of knowledge. It's about having great conversations **that make people want to know more**.

As a spokesperson, you're building **comfort, trust** and **familiarity** for your expertise or your cause.

You're the entry point for people to learn more.

Whether you're trying to influence a Prime Minister or a parent in the suburbs - your job is **human connection**.

TYPES OF MEDIA COMMENT

NEWS GRABS

News “grabs” are short 5-20 second snippets of conversation used by broadcasters to add expertise or human impact to a news story.

You might speak to a journalist for 5-10 minutes, only for them to use 5 seconds of your conversation.

Don't worry - this is normal!

PRE-RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Where “news grabs” are about short attention spans - pre-recorded interviews are about helping journalists tell a bigger story.

All stories need a beginning, a middle and an end.

In pre-recorded interviews, journalists need you to fill out this story structure.

LIVE INTERVIEWS

Live interviews are about entertaining and engaging with people. The interviewer and the audience should feel like you're talking directly to them.

Live interviews are a slightly more polished version of the conversations you have with your family, friends and colleagues every day.

TIPS FOR NEWS GRABS

TAILOR FOR SHORT ATTENTION SPANS



REPEAT THE QUESTION

Journalists need to be able to edit out their question. **Your answer must be able to work out of context.**

For example - in response to the question “What did you have for breakfast this morning?” you need to respond “I had cereal for breakfast this morning” instead of just saying “cereal”.

GIVE OPTIONS

Because news grabs are pre-recorded, you can give journalists multiple options. It’s okay to request for the journalist to ask the question again so you can give a clearer response.

News journalists will come back to you in future if they know you’re a reliable and flexible option when they get back to the edit suite.

SHOW EMOTION AND PASSION

Radio and television news need to hold the audience’s attention. It’s okay to show some emotion and passion - you don’t have to be sensationalist, but you can add some perspective.

“These findings really shocked us”, “We’re glad to see the Government has done x” - **it’s okay to care!**

PRE-RECORDED INTERVIEWS



TELLING A BIGGER STORY

Where “news grabs” are about short attention spans - pre-recorded interviews are about helping journalists tell a bigger story.

All stories need a beginning, a middle and an end.

In pre-recorded interviews, journalists need you to fill out this story structure.

TIPS FOR PRE-RECORDED INTERVIEWS

COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING



FIND OUT WHAT THE STORY IS

Speak to the journalist or producer beforehand and **find out the story angle**.

Be their collaborator and find out what role they want you to play in this story.

If you're not the right fit, be comfortable saying no or offer them an alternative conversation.

REFINE 3 CLEAR MESSAGES

Don't try and memorise a speech to recite word-for-word.

Refine down to **the most important 3 messages** you want to get across and reinforce them across your interview.

These will be your guide regardless of what questions come up.

USE EXAMPLES

In a longer interview format, use examples, anecdotes and stories to illustrate your points. These can be:

- Personal or shared experiences - "we've all been frustrated by x".
- Second-hand: "I met a family the other day that had to deal with this problem".

LIVE INTERVIEWS



FOCUS ON CONVERSATION

Live interviews are about entertaining and engaging with people.

The interviewer and the audience should feel like you're talking **directly to them**.

Live interviews are a slightly more polished version of the conversations you have with your family, friends and colleagues every day.

TIPS FOR LIVE INTERVIEWS

HOW DO YOU WANT THE AUDIENCE TO FEEL?



BE FLEXIBLE

Live broadcasters will always prioritise good conversation.

They're the surrogate for the listener or viewer and will turn the conversation to what they think their audience wants - **not what you want.**

A good interviewer follows the most interesting conversation flow, not necessarily the planned questions.

REFINE 3 CLEAR MESSAGES

Especially for live interviews:

Don't try and memorise a speech to recite word-for-word.

Refine down to **the most important 3 messages** you want to get across and reinforce them across your interview.

These will be your guide regardless of what questions come up.

BE YOURSELF

Your biggest strength in a live interview is being authentically **you.**

Think of a live interview as an advertisement for you or your cause - **you're planting a seed for the audience to learn more.** Don't try to achieve too much by reciting too many facts, figures or stories.

Have an enjoyable, informed conversation.

TECHNICAL TIPS



RADIO/PODCAST

- Radio and podcast interviews are often over the phone. Test the quality of your phone/internet connection in advance.
- Watch your posture (yes, even though they can't see you!) and don't keep looking down at a script or notes. This can affect the quality of your voice.



TELEVISION/VIDEO

- Avoid clothes with tight patterns or distracting elements.
- TV lights can make you look “ghostly” white. Consider using a tinted moisturiser or basic foundation powder. (Some TV networks will do this for you)
- Avoid loud/clanky jewellery.
- In-studio: focus on the interviewer and ignore the cameras.



PRINT/ONLINE

- Assume everything you say is “on-the-record” - meaning if a print or online journalist calls, assume they will report anything you say.
- If you're providing a written quote - say it out aloud to yourself before sending. It needs to sound like spoken words, not formal written language.

PREPARING MEDIA LINES

01

DEFINE YOUR GOAL

Define a **specific** goal. Don't be too broad like "awareness".

Do you want website visitors? A law changed? Community behaviour change?

02

PICTURE YOUR AUDIENCE

Once you've defined your goal, picture the most important person who can help achieve that goal.

What do they need to know?

03

REFINE 3 MESSAGES

Based on your goal and your audience - refine 3 simple messages that will make them **act or react** the way you want.



STRUCTURE:

Topic:	A clear and simple explanation of the topic.
Goal:	A specific goal related to your personal/professional development, your campaign or your cause.
Audience:	A description of the audience who will help you achieve this goal.

EXAMPLE:

Topic:	Why everyone should eat more honey
Goal:	A boost in the sales of honey
Audience:	Parents who make school sandwiches

A media lines template is available at auscommsguide.com

STRUCTURE:

Message 1:

Story structure - Beginning (The past)

Set the tone. Why is this topic important/interesting/fun/serious? What's the history and context?

Message 2:

Story structure - Middle (The present)

Why should the audience care right now?

Message 3:

Story structure - End (Future and/or action needed)

What can the audience do?

EXAMPLE:

Topic:	Why everyone should eat more honey
Goal:	A boost in the sales of honey
Audience:	Parents who make school sandwiches

Message 1:	<p>Growing up my grandma used to make honey sandwiches for us after school and we have so many fond memories of honey sweets.</p> <p>We've published some classic honey recipes so everyone can <u>re-live</u> those memories.</p>
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Message 2:	<p>It's so hard for parents to create good school lunches that kids will actually eat - but it's win/win using more honey: we support local bees in our environment and the kids love it!</p>
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Message 3:	<p>Download our free honey recipe book and share what you've made with us!</p>
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DEALING WITH THE UNEXPECTED

ADAPTING MID-CONVERSATION



DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER?

That's okay! Use some **bridging sentences** to come back to your messages:

"That's a really interesting question, but what our research focused on was..."

or refer to other people's expertise that you trust:

"Economists have done some interesting work on this, but we..."

GO WITH IT!

If the interviewer is taking a different path, but it's within your expertise...go with it!

This can be your opportunity to test new messages and learn what interviewers and audiences are interested in.

Remember: media are trying to entertain and inform.

ARE THEY ARGUMENTATIVE?

For the vast majority of media spokespeople - media just want a good conversation and they will work with you.

Sometimes they'll play devil's advocate or try to put words in your mouth.

You don't have to bite - come back to your messages and your goals.

HOW TO SECURE INTERVIEWS

FAST MEDIA STATEMENTS

When breaking news happens, **speed is everything**.

As an expert, journalists need your comment in their inbox as fast as possible - often they're running live blogs, trying to write a story, appearing on TV/radio themselves.

You don't need to write a whole media release - a simple "[Organisation/Expert] responds to [breaking news topic]" can work fine.

RELATIONSHIPS

Genuinely get to know journalists and producers.

Specialists reporters often want to know what's going on in your specialty or industry - even if it's not a "story" yet. They'll guide you towards the kind of stories they can get published/broadcast.

Find out what they want and let them know what you're confident talking about at last minute.

WEBSITES/DATABASES/SOCIAL MEDIA

Journalists use Google, website listings, social media, media databases and more.

Do you have a good website that makes it quick and easy to contact you? When breaking news happens, do you put comments online quickly? Are you listed on services like the Australian Science Media Exchange (SciMex)?

Make it easy for journalists to contact you.

WANT MORE HELP?



Hi, I'm JB!

I've been teaching broadcast and media skills for nearly 20 years.

As a media spokesperson and advisor, I've been on every major Australian TV and radio network, published in digital and print media across the country and launched major media campaigns reaching millions of Australians.



MEDIA AND COMMS CONSULTING

Are you unsure how to get your organisation noticed? Are you passionate about a cause and want to make change happen through the media?

I can help you come up with smart communication strategies that achieve your goals.

MEDIA TRAINING

I love bringing people out of their shells. I conduct one-on-one, group and tailored media training sessions for smart people and good causes.

Get in touch - comms@jbau.com.au or call 0451 949 126