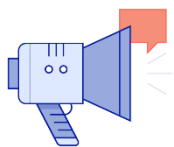


# 10 Tips for Becoming a Reliable, Effective Spokesperson on Road Safety

**The media can be used to your advantage to build public support for and compliance with road safety initiatives.** When you build strong relationships with journalists, you will earn media coverage when you need it. And when the media perceive you as friendly, responsive and a bearer of clear, evidence-based messages, your perspective and voice is more likely to be included in the stories that you did not initiate.

Whether you seek attention or not, when you are in front of the media, you become a spokesperson and an opinion leader. What you say and do in front of a media impacts your personal image, and the image of the institution you represent. **In these tips, we outline how the media can become an ally** in communicating messages to the public that come from a solutions perspective and are in line with our objectives.

## How do I build relationships with journalists?



1. To achieve a good relationship with members of the press, work with your department's communication team to identify journalists who cover road safety issues. This might fall under several topics, including transportation, health or the economy. **You can work with your communication contact to set up informal meetings "on background" to talk about a specific topic or share updates on your work.** At events where you see journalists, take the time to say hello which can help them feel seen, and generate a friendly relationship.



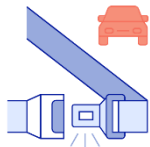
2. Try not to refuse interviews (unless you really have nothing to say or it cannot be scheduled). **If the journalist is looking to discuss a topic outside of your area of expertise, connect them to the right person,** always in line with your communication team's protocol. If a journalist would like to speak to or photograph someone affected by road safety issues, take the opportunity to recommend people who you know will communicate the message you would like instead of leaving them to interview any person they encounter.

## How do I deliver strong and memorable (“quotable”) messages?



3. Prepare your key messages in advance of an interview and make sure they are:
  - Positive
  - Brief and contain one or two ideas at most each
  - Supported with examples or data
  - Repeated several times throughout an interview
  - Understandable, including avoiding jargon, acronyms and technical language (imagine you are speaking to your neighbor or family member, not your colleagues)

## Remember that from a public health and safe system approach, there are no road “accidents,”



4. Instead consider using incident, collision or crash and explain to journalists why it is important (and a global standard) to do the same.
5. **Think visually** by providing photo opportunities (think action shots) or photos that have already been professionally taken to journalists. Journalists are more likely to cover a story when there are clear visuals. Journalists also need to paint a picture with words, so if you have a specific story or example or metaphor in your key message, they may be more likely to listen.

## How do I speak to a journalist, especially when I am nervous?



6. **Breathe.** Breathing when you begin forces you to pause, will relax your body and help you speak confidently from the diaphragm to share your messages. It is fine to pause and for there to be a few seconds of silence. In the middle of speaking, you can also take a couple of deep breaths and then continue, if needed.
7. **Find a mid-range pace.** A slow pace can be boring, but speaking too quickly can make your message difficult to understand. Practice to find a clear, comfortable pace. It is likely slower than your normal speed of speech.
8. Keep a friendly and conversational tone of voice to engage listeners. For example: “You might think x, but in reality, x” or “We often hear that people say x....”

## How do you handle difficult questions?



9. **Be honest when you don’t know.** It is okay to say, “I don’t have the information at the moment,” and if you can, commit to share it later. Don’t express assumptions, judgments or personal opinions.
10. **In difficult interviews, there are responses that can diffuse situations.** For example:
  - If you encounter aggression, meet it with calm
  - If you encounter speculation, give data and information
  - If you are interrupted, say “allow me to finish”
  - Paraphrase to repeat and drive home a point by saying “What I am saying is...”
  - Meet silence by answering the question you would most like to be asked