

Working with the Media

As part of AAEA's Communicating Out Strategy, we are working to establish AAEA as a "go to" for media and other organizations needing expert analysis or information on AAEA relevant topics. The intention of this document is to give advice and insight on working with the media.

Traditional Media

- You don't have to say yes to any media request, whether it comes from a reporter or the AAEA business office.
- That being said, most times the media is not out to do a "gotcha" story.
- Never go "off the record". There really is no such thing.
- There's no need to feel intimidated. Remember, they want something from YOU.
- If you get a cold call from a reporter:
 - If you aren't comfortable talking at that moment, get their contact information and call them back. There is a chance they will tell you they are "on deadline" and they need to talk to you right away. Remember they are asking something of you, so if you want to talk you can do it on your timeline.
 - If you have questions about doing an interview, contact the AAEA Communications Manager and they can do some research on the reporter/publication and help prepare you for possible questions, interview techniques, etc.
- Preparing for the interview by creating talking points (don't be afraid to write them down)
- Most reporters will not send questions in advance. Don't bother asking unless you have a very good rapport with a reporter. They may give you general topics, but not specific questions.
- During the interview:
 - Answer the question and then stop talking. An old "trick" by reporters is to not ask another question right away, hoping the person they are interviewing will give them more information because they feel like they need to keep talking during an uncomfortable silence
 - It's ok to say "I don't know". And if you do, it could be a good time to refer the reporter to one of your colleagues (preferably an AAEA member, but it's your call!)
 - Go back to your talking points – be a broken record to make sure you get your message/information to the reporter.
 - Try your best to avoid too much jargon. You don't need to "dumb it down", but chances are good you're much smarter than the reporter. Help them help you.
 - Don't be drawn into hypothetical situations – this is particularly important because so much of the work and research done by members is fact-driven
- Different types of media stories/interviews:
 - Print reporters will typically have longer interviews because they have the opportunity to write longer, more in-depth stories. This is where you can give longer answers to questions and provide in-depth insight

- Most radio and tv stories are short because of the time constraints they have most of the time. They are looking for quick, to-the-point “sound bites” – so try not to over-answer; keep your answers as concise as possible in these situations.
- Working with broadcast media (especially TV)
 - Talk just to the reporter, ignoring the camera. It’s difficult but the best advice I’ve ever heard is to pretend you’re having a conversation with the reporter and forget it’s being recorded.
 - If it is a recorded interview most likely it will be edited. It’s OK to start over if you don’t like the way you started answering a question.
 - For TV interviews, wear solid-colored clothing
- After the interview
 - Ask the reporter when their story is scheduled to be published/go on air.
 - It doesn’t hurt to ask if you can see the story (if it’s print media) before it’s published. Many reporters won’t, and if they refuse, follow up by asking if you can fact check it or ask to see your quotes to see if you are quoted properly and in context.
 - If it is a cold call, please let the AAEA Communications Manager know you did an interview so they can track coverage.
- Bottom line: if in doubt, contact the AAEA Communications Manager or Executive Director for advice, guidance, etc.