

10/12/23

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# Media Training

University Relations & School of Public Health

## SPH Communications



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Director



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## University Public Relations



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# School of Public Health

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SPH Communications works to raise the school's profile by communicating its value and impact to internal and external audiences.

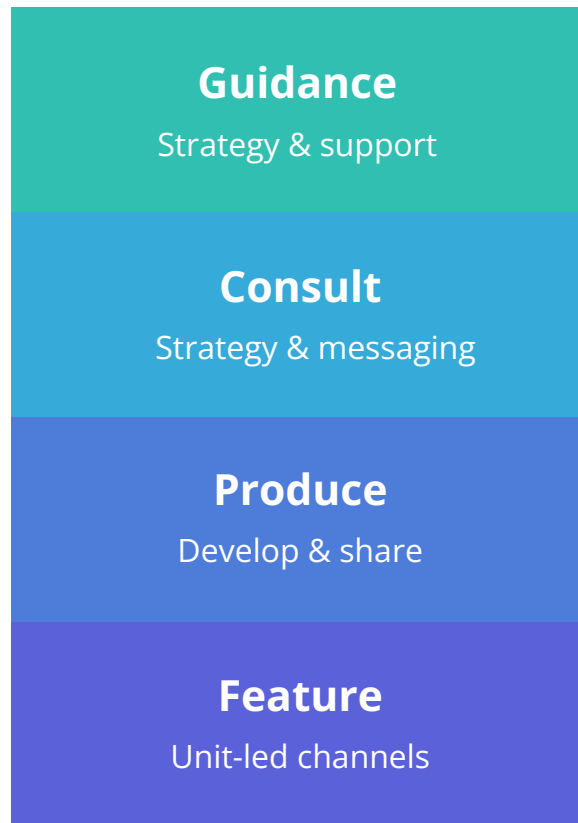
## Portfolio

- Lead school-wide brand, marketing, media relations, events, website, social media, executive and internal communications, and prominent faculty awards.
- Serve as the consistent voice for our school and its leadership.
- Consult and collaborate on unit-specific projects and initiatives.
- **SPH is your first point of contact when working with the media.**

# The School's focus

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SPH Communications is closely connected with UR to ensure we get the most out of every media interaction and support the strategic goals of the School and the University. They are your first point of contact to consult on media requests.





# University Relations

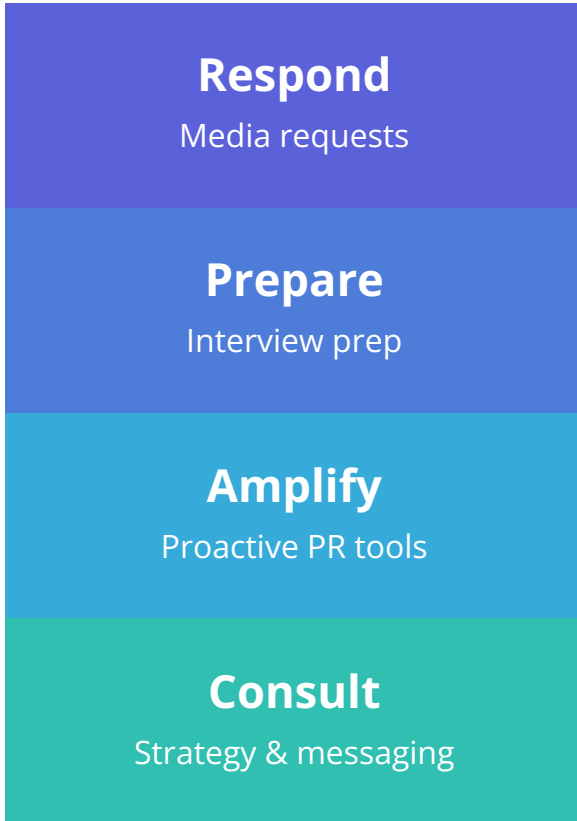
Our teams partner internally and externally and support communicators with training, tools, and consulting services to effectively reach audiences and advance the University's mission.

# University Public Relations

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The PR team collaborates with colleges, units and campuses to advance and protect the University's reputation through:

- Proactive and responsive **media relations**
- **Media training**, briefing, staffing
- **Strategic** planning and implementation
- Crisis and **issues management**
- **Data Practices Act** management
- Serve as **Public Information Officer**



## UR PR focus

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We're often the first call for media. We connect key U of M stakeholders and track a story to ensure the reporter is receiving information and/or interviews that will lead to accurate and fair coverage.



## We are your partners

We collaborate across the University to help deliver the most effective public relations results possible. Keeping your partners in SPH communications aware of any news or media requests ensures we are able to provide the best counsel and support.

**Rule of thumb:** the sooner, the better!



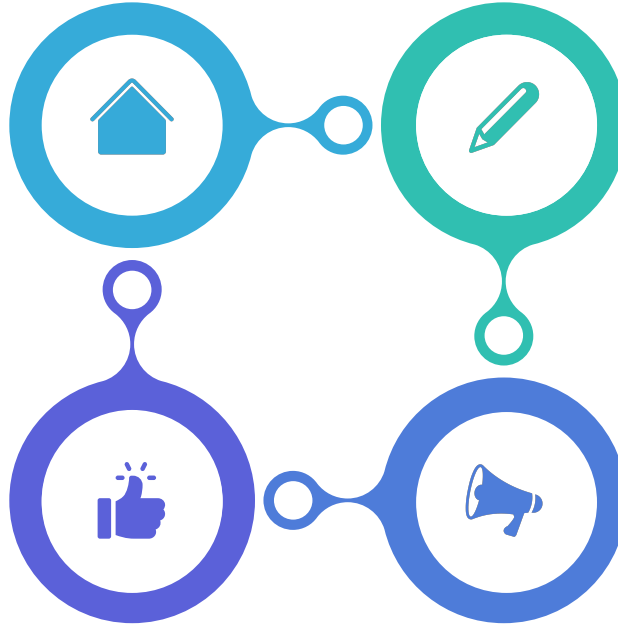


# Raising your profile

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## SPH Comms

Features and updates on local websites and other publications



## Commentary

Sharing your insights and opinions with the media

## Social media

Engaging directly with the community

## Proactive PR

Consider opportunities to use research briefs, expert alerts, pitches

# Why work with the media

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Giving interviews to the media is a great way to share thought leadership, build public understanding of new discoveries or advocate for ways to tackle society's pressing issues.

- Reflect the University's mission
  - Build awareness around an issue
  - Inform, influence and advocate
  - Enhance reputation and visibility
  - Highlight the value of research
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# A day in the life of a reporter

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**24/7/365**

Fast-paced news cycle,  
often with several  
daily deadlines

**Multipatform**

Sharing on multiple  
platforms (print, web,  
social, broadcast, etc.)

**To the point**

Little time for deep  
exploration of  
nuanced topics

# Constructing a news story

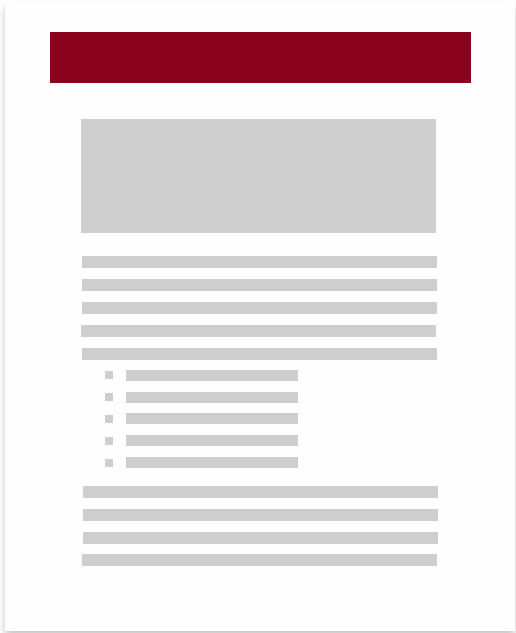
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News stories put the most important information at the top. The headline and first paragraph highlight the main points, followed by additional details in decreasing order of significance.



# Our proactive tools

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## Research Brief

Features newly published research and key findings



## Expert Alert

Connects University expertise to a current event or topic



## Talking with...UMN

Q&A with an expert, targeted to Greater MN media outlets



# Remember your role

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You have the information and expertise to help the reporter and their audiences understand the facts and ultimately why they should care.

- Clearly **outline the basic elements** (who, what, when, where, why)
  - What's happening?
  - What does it mean to the average person?
  - What experts/others doing about it?
- Be patient and **use examples** to break down complex ideas
- **It's ok to confirm** what you've said makes sense to the reporter
- Use **University of Minnesota School of Public Health** in the title you share with the reporter.



**INTERVIEW  
BASICS**



# Understanding requests

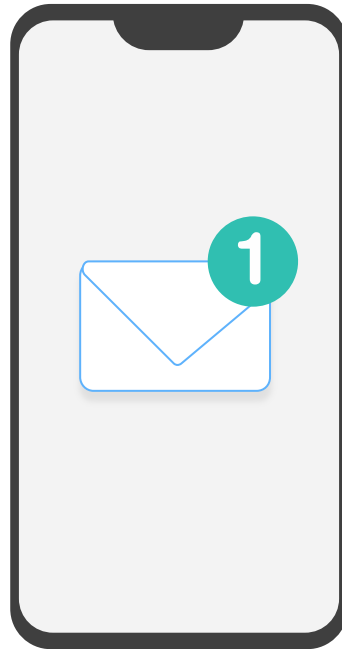
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## Logistics

What's the reporter's outlet and deadline?

Interview format (phone, in-person, video call)?

How much time is needed? Do they need video or photos?

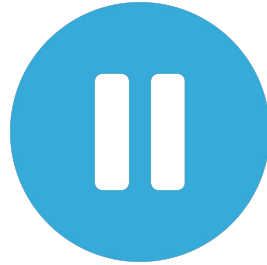


## Subject matter

What's the story topic and focus?

Why do they want to interview me (my expertise or my role at the U of M)?

Who else are they interviewing?



## Pause and prepare

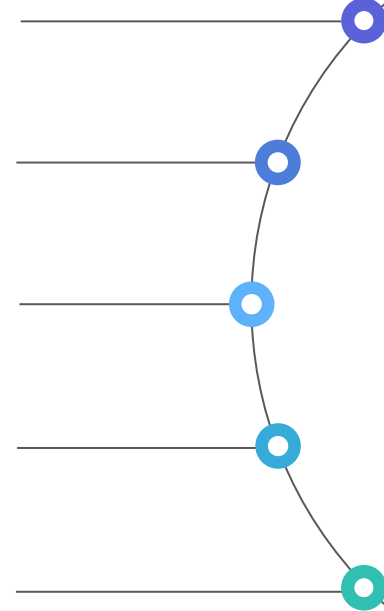
Avoid on the spot interviews. Take time to fully understand the request, consider your position, and ask for help!

Contact **[sphnews@umn.edu](mailto:sphnews@umn.edu)** for support.

# Start with your own questions

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Considering these five questions will help guide your interview approach and help you decide what main points you want to be sure to share with the reporter.

- What do I want to be asked?
  - What should people remember?
  - What do I want the story to say?
  - What tough questions are there?
  - Why should anyone care?
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## Getting to the point

Always develop key messages—they should be true, brief, and easy to understand. Focus on making clear points that are supported with proof and try to personalize your delivery.

# Best practices

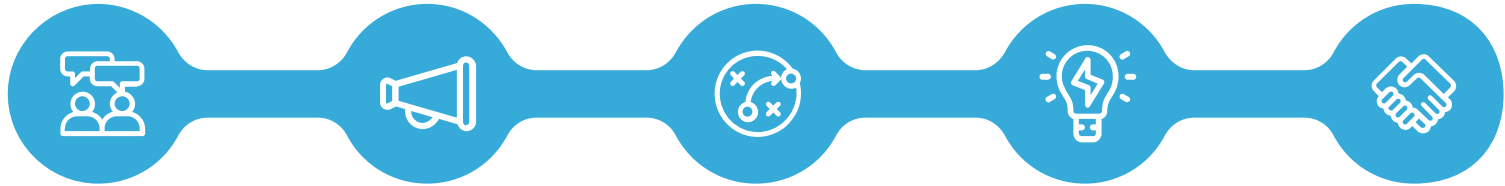
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## Sound bites

Speak clearly & with emotion  
to make memorable quotes

## Finish strong

Take advantage of  
open-ended final questions



## Relax

Practice, breathe, and engage  
to feel more confident

## Bridge

Return to key messages & get  
the conversation on track

## Follow up

Thank the reporter & let the  
SPH team know how it went

# How to be quotable

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When a reporter asks you for an interview, they are looking for factual information and a source who can add color to the story and make it lively and interesting!



## Television & radio

Add expressive words like *exciting* or *concerning* to amplify your most important points.

Quotes are typically 7-12 seconds, so practice concise phrasing.



## Print & online

Ideal quotes evoke images and help illustrate broader ideas.

There is more variety in quote length, from a few words to a couple of sentences.

# Strong quotes

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## Bloomberg

“Having a place for people in your community to give birth is just a basic service,” says Kozhimannil. “You can’t have a functioning community without it. And yet it’s increasingly seen as extra... At a certain point it’s like, what are moms supposed to do?”

## MPR

“You don't have to be within 100 feet of a forest fire to see the forest fire. You can be a few miles away and still appreciate it. I think that's where we're at with omicron in our schools. We didn't have to be in every school to realize that there was tremendous transmission going on in schools.”

## MPR

“Side effects from boosters run from no symptoms to a temporarily sore arm to ‘feeling really crummy for a day,’ but they’re all still better than full-on COVID.”

# Bridging phrases

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“The most important thing to remember is...”

“Let me tell you what we’ve been hearing...”

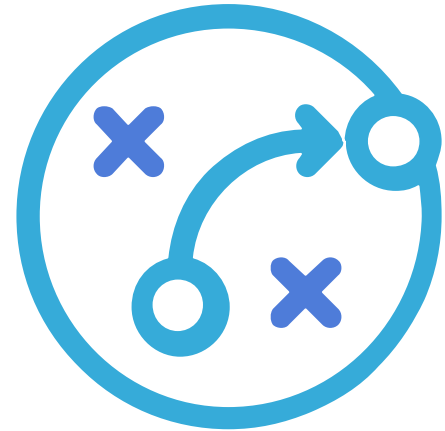
“Keep in mind that...”

“That said...”

“But even more importantly...”

“The thing we are focusing on most is...”

“What we see as an even bigger issue is...”





# Avoiding interview pitfalls

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- “Winging it” — Always prepare
- Using acronyms or jargon — Use plain language and examples
- Straying too far off topic — Stick to your key messages
- Filling the silence — Respond clearly and concisely
- Saying “no comment” — Remember to bridge
- Revealing private information — Saying “I don’t know” is ok — offer to follow-up if you are unsure (we will help)
- Speculating or lying —

*Never assume you are off-the-record*

# Taking on tough questions

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Knowing how to give clear answers and restructure or navigate around questions can help you have a successful and effective interview.

- Do your homework
- Don't repeat the negative
- Bridge and be bold
- Don't answer when appropriate
- Question the question



# INTERVIEW FORMAT

# Media/PR terms

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## On the record

Sources are fully identified, by name and position, in the article. *Never assume you are “off the record” during an interview.*

## Background

Information can be used but can't be attributed to the interviewee directly.

## Live/Recorded

Live interviews are for simultaneous broadcast and cannot be edited. You may ask to rephrase or clarify your responses in recorded interviews.

## Staffing

University staff can sit in on an interview to observe and assist with follow-up questions.

# TV: On location or in studio

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## **Pre-recorded interview**

Make sure to speak to the reporter, don't look directly at the camera.

## **B-roll**

Additional footage used to provide context and visual interest.

## **Natural sound**

The ambient or environmental sounds that bring the story to life.

[Watch the first 40 seconds of this story](#) for an example.

# TV appearances

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## **Clothes**

Solid colors

Avoid small patterns such as dots or stripes

Avoid large, dangly jewelry

Make sure there is a place to clip a mic pack! Waistbands on pants and skirts can work. Consider a belt or jacket if you wear a dress.

## **Makeup**

Avoid shine and prioritize matte products

Add a little more than you think need

Avoid shimmer/glowy or dewy finishes

# Print & online

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## **Recording**

Journalists should ask for permission to record a conversation for their notes, but they won't always.

If you are concerned about it, be sure to clarify before in interview.

## **Media needs**

Reporter may want to photograph you in your office/lab, use a screenshot of a video interview, or request a high resolution photo.

They may also ask about video opportunities.

# Radio & podcasts

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## **Sound quality**

Go to a quiet room in your home or office — the smaller the space, the better the sound quality. Also, avoid speakerphones.

## **Know how long your interview will last.**

An hour long interview will require you to elaborate and provide specific examples or stories related to your topic. An interview that is less than 10 minutes will require you to provide succinct answers.

## **Will there be any listener questions?**

Are there any types of questions you would not be comfortable answering? Let the producer know ahead of time.



# Zoom interviews

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## **Check your lighting**

Natural light is great if you can manage it. Either way, make sure the lightsource is in front of you to avoid harsh shadows.

## **Sightlines (and wifi) are everything**

Look directly into the camera and mind your posture. Also, confirm your internet connection is all set in advance.

## **Simple backgrounds are best**

Make sure your background is clean and orderly and avoid digital or blur backgrounds. Also, consider making the background fit the story. Can you do the interview from the lab or in the field? Can you have an object or equipment in the frame?

# We're here to help

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## SPH Resources

[SPH News & Events form](#)

[SPH Research form](#)

[sphnews@umn.edu](mailto:sphnews@umn.edu)

## UR Resources

[university-relations.umn.edu](http://university-relations.umn.edu)

[news.umn.edu](http://news.umn.edu)



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