Before sitting down with a reporter, review these interview pointers:

- **Prepare** — Practice for a news interview as you would before a job interview. Review what you want the reporter to know about you and your work, imagine what questions they might ask you and practice how you will answer them.
  
  - **TV** — Don’t wear stripes, paisley, busy patterns, or the colors white, black or red; these do not translate well on camera or on tape. You may be required to wear some degree of makeup when appearing under studio lighting. Arrive early to the studio to allow TV staff time to make you up or otherwise prepare you. Don’t slouch in your chair; be conscious and conservative in your mannerisms and seated postures. Practice restraint in speaking with your hands; don’t flail or make wild gestures.
  
  - **Radio and TV** — Don’t pound desks, snap, clap, touch microphones, etc., as these interfere with sound quality and may drown you out.

- **Sound bites** — Prepare three to four succinct comments or messages you can use to describe your most important points. Rephrase and reiterate them throughout the interview. Practice but don’t over-rehearse; you want your comments to be concise and pithy but not sound scripted.

- **Personality** — Don’t be afraid to let a little personality shine through where appropriate. If you’re clever and witty, show it. If you’re passionate about your work, say so. Above all, relax and be yourself.

- **Keep it simple** — Explain concepts in layman’s terms. Resist the urge to equivocate or present complex, jargon-laden descriptions. Offer summaries, not specifics (if journalists need the latter, they will ask).
  
  - **Facts and specifics** — If a reporter asks you something you don’t immediately, it’s better to say you will check on it and get back to them before deadline. It’s better to do this and provide reporters with accurate information rather than guess and end up with an error in print or on air.

- **Declining comment** — No matter how hard reporters press, you are under no obligation to answer any question or discuss any topic in an interview that you don’t want to. When you refuse, it is best to explain why, otherwise journalists may perceive you are “hiding something” and attack. If you are uncomfortable about answering, you could say, “I’m sorry, but that’s not really my area of expertise, so I wouldn’t feel comfortable speaking to that question. May I refer you to a colleague better able to answer it?”

- **Follow-up questions** — New questions frequently arise once a reporter begins to write. Editors and others may pose further questions — often on deadline. Be available to field these questions; as you end interviews, offer journalists regular and after-hours contact information. If you anticipate being unavailable during their deadline cycle, let them know.

- **What you see is what you said** — Reporters for newspapers and magazines will quote what you actually said, not what you meant to say or what you meant by what you said. Choose your words carefully; think of how readers might interpret it out of context. Quotation is not always an exact science; don’t sweat the small stuff, but do calmly let reporters know if you have been erroneously or egregiously misquoted.

- **Lost in editing** — Be aware that taped interviews are subject to editorial alteration and that newspaper and magazine stories are frequently subject to editing. Most journalists will do this in a fair and accurate manner. However, contextual problems may arise. Sometimes well-meaning editors may inadvertently introduce errors in the process. Do let journalists know when an error has occurred so they have an opportunity to correct it.

- **Seeing the story** — Don’t ask to review a story before it is printed or aired; most journalists will refuse to let you do so. The origins of this refusal lie in the founding principles of journalism — that a free press should be independent, objective and resistant to efforts to influence or approve its reporting. However, if there is a specific quote or fact you are concerned about, contact the reporter, tell him or her what you are concerned about and ask if you could verify it. Very often the report will be willing — in the interest of accuracy — to review the quote or fact with you.