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## Challenging Types of Media Interviews

- **The Rapid Fire Questioner**
- **The Paraphrasing Parrot**
- **The Disrupter** (aka the Stephen Colbert)
- **The Veiled Negative**
- **The Bully**
- **The overly friendly interview**
- **The ‘last minute’ interview**

### **How to Deal With Challenging Interview Styles**

- **The Rapid Fire or Machine Gunner Questioner:** This type of interviewer asks several questions quickly and all at once. The best way to deal with this kind of interview is to answer the question you want to with a key message.
- **The Paraphrasing Parrot:** The interviewer paraphrases what you have said. This can be dangerous. You must listen carefully and correct immediately any information that strays from the original statements made.
- **The Disrupter:** The interviewer asks another question or interrupts before you are finished. In this kind of situation you can ask the interviewer, “please let me finish my answer...” or if your key messages can be conveyed in 10 seconds or less you should not have a problem. You can also continue answering the question despite interruptions.
- **Negative Leader:** This type of interview will pin negative labels on you. Correct the negatives with the positives.
- **The Bully:** Make sure to answer their key question only and don’t get mad. You can ask them to repeat the question and use pauses. It’s also fine to re-phrase the question in your own words before you answer it. Always be polite. Don’t be intimidated, remain calm, avoid confrontation and stick to key messages.

- **The overly friendly interviewer:** Either they enjoy meeting you or enjoy disarming you, especially in the pre-interview and then go ‘in for the kill’ while recording. Be cautious, but not cold.
- **The ‘last minute’ interviewer:** This is an opportunity for you to take control of the interview. This reporter has probably been assigned the story last minute without having time to do all the background research. Be prepared for ill-informed questions.
- **Note:** If the journalist asks the same question repeatedly in different ways, they are probably fishing for a specific answer to fit their agenda

#### Tips on answering media questions:

1. Answer clearly using key messages
2. Say “I don’t know the answer to that question, but I’ll get back to you.” (*print reporters only*)
3. Say “I don’t know, but what I can tell you is...” (*for radio and television*)
4. Say “I’m not going to answer that question, and I’ll tell you why.”
5. Side step and bridge to a key message. “That’s not really the issue here. The issue is...”
6. Take the time you need to formulate answers
7. Quotes are 20-25 words on average
8. You are the expert
9. Smile
10. If you don’t understand a question, you can ask for it to be repeated

#### Controlling Interviews

Either you or the reporter controls the interview – so take the lead.

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**Tips on leading:**

- Hooking: not completing an answer or throwing out a “hook”
- Bridging: transitioning to your agenda after answering a question
- Flagging: break up your answer into a number of important points and say so