



Podcast and Radio Interviews from Home

Use your booking sheet. Be sure you have the exact information for the interview date and time (remember to check time zones!), emergency backup information in case you have trouble connecting, and the length of the interview.

Listen to the show. There is no excuse not to listen to other interviews the host has done to learn the tone and attitude of the host.

Before the interview, read the initial pitch or press release that landed you the interview. If you are writing your next book, be certain to review the book for which you are being interviewed. You do not want to share key messages from the wrong book. I have seen this happen! You can also provide a list of questions and answers or talking points to help guide how the interview will unfold.

Know what you want to get out of the interview.

What do you want to accomplish? Do you want listeners to go to Amazon to buy your book? Go to an opt-in page and subscribe to your email list? Enter a program you are offering? Attend one of your events?

What is your overall big idea and message? Then ask yourself what the three most important key messages are that you will always deliver in an interview. Knowing where you are going makes it much easier to get there.

Practice. Practice. Practice. You can “wing it” only when you have burned your key messages into your soul.

Do mock interviews and time your answers. You can do this with your partner or a friend. You can even do it on your recording device. When you hear someone do an interview and it sounds like they are a natural, you can bet they have practiced a lot!

Create a distraction-free environment before an interview. Close any windows or doors (it is amazing how one neighbor likes to fire up the weed whacker just when you are about to go live), quiet all your devices, and make sure those nearby know you cannot be interrupted. Put a sign on the door: *Live interview in progress. Do not disturb.*

Ask the producer or host what equipment they want you to use. For some, using a cell phone is out of the question. Others will not tolerate earbuds with a microphone. Some require an external mic with headphones. Some really do not care what it sounds like. Ask.

Warm up your vocal cords before you go on. Sing. Drink warm water. Practice. You do not want to mumble or stumble right off the bat. Start the interview strong by being completely warmed up.

Have plenty of water nearby. A dry mouth can turn a podcast interview into a disaster but be careful when you swallow. Choking will not help you either.

Smile. It comes across in your tone of voice; plus, it will make you feel happier, more in control, and more confident. Of course, make sure you are congruent and NOT smiling when you are delivering bad or sad information.

Steer clear of the classic interview killers, including one or two-word responses, incessant rambling, using jargon, or overselling your book. Also, avoid using speech fillers—superfluous and distracting sounds or words, such as “um,” “you know,” and “like.”

Forget the line, “In my book....”

Omit the phrase completely from your vocabulary. Those three words can kill an interview on the spot because they can be considered oversell. It sounds like you are holding back, insisting listeners buy your book if they want the important stuff. Of course, we want them to buy your book, but we want them to take that action because you are such a giver and they are intrigued.

Do not repeat yourself. Once you repeat a key message—unless doing so is specifically to stress it and you say so—it signals to the host that the interview is over. Keep things fresh.

Memorize the host’s name and use it sparingly throughout the interview. A person’s name is music to their ears, but do not overdo it, or it will come across as a premeditated technique that sounds inauthentic.

An interview is a conversation. Do not perform. Communicate. You will be more natural using relaxed language. This challenges speakers in particular because they are used to holding an audience and presenting to them. It is called “holding court.” Do not be guilty of taking over the interview as if it is a presentation. It is a conversation.

Listen carefully and respond to the question asked. Never answer a question other than the one you were asked in an effort to promote yourself. There are plenty of politicians to do that. If it is an off-the-wall question and not part of why you are there, then begin to answer it and figure out a way to bridge it back to one of your key messages. This ability speaks to the importance of knowing your key messages backward and forwards. On one level, you are listening and responding to what is being said, while at the same time, you are thinking about

how to direct the conversation seamlessly to the next key message. This takes some finesse and practice.

Do not assume the host understands your expertise. At the same time, do not patronize. Avoid jargon. Use simple language that is easy to understand.

Start with the climax. Forget about warming up to make a point. Start with the conclusion first. Begin with your best message, particularly if it is controversial. Start with a bang!

If you flub a response, simply and easily correct yourself and keep going. What you perceive as a mistake, most listeners will not even notice. It is not important that you made a blunder. It is how you recover from it that is most impactful.

If a host says something that is clearly incorrect, rather than trying to convince them otherwise or call them uninformed or worse, just begin your response with, “Actually . . .” and go on to tell the truth. Simple. Or, another possibility is to say, “Some people hold that point of view, but another way to look at it is...”

Make your messages practical and actionable, not academic or abstract. Bring ideas to life with real-world stories or statistics. Paint pictures in the listeners’ minds. Use active language.

Tie your work to hot topics of the day—breaking news, emerging issues or trends, and notable current events. This makes you newsworthy and timely. A new story may have broken from when you pitched the show to when you appear on the program. You will appear even more relevant and savvy if you refer to the latest story.

Challenge conventional wisdom. Have a contrary or counterintuitive viewpoint or debunk popular myths. This approach works well in pitches too.

Stay fresh and interested in your material. This is not the first time you have discussed your ideas, but it is the first time these listeners have heard them.

Be prepared for a contrary question or possibly some negative comments. It is the host’s job to explore different points of view in an interview. It is what makes a conversation interesting to the listener. Expect it and be prepared with your best answer. Avoid becoming argumentative or defensive. You will not win a fight. One exception: If arguing is the show's culture and you know that going in, be prepared.

Debrief after each interview. Ask yourself, “What specifically did I do well?” and “What opportunities did I miss—and why?” Jot down your responses while they are fresh in your mind. When you get a link to an interview, wait at least twenty-four hours to review it. You will hear it differently.

Be prepared for a common last question: “Do you have one final thing to say to our audience?” Or, “Is there anything I should have asked you but did not?” Or, “Have a final thing to say!” It could be a repeat of your top key message or something new and memorable.

If asked where your book is available, be ready to say it and have it roll off your tongue. Practice it beforehand so that it sounds easy and natural.

Finally, have fun and enjoy yourself. It is one more powerful tip to maximize your podcast and radio interviews.

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