

The Media Interview One Sheet

Seven interview formats, condensed to the rules that change the outcome. Print it, hand it to your executive before the interview, and work down the list.

Jess Todtfeld has trained leaders at Google, JPMorgan, American Express.

Start here THE RULES THAT HOLD IN EVERY FORMAT

- 1 Build your Media Messaging Grid.** Three categories, one-word headings, in front of you before every interview. It is the difference between "I rambled" and "I nailed three points."
- 2 Stay focused on three categories.** A popular set: Problem, Solution, Call to Action. Bring every answer back to one of them. An audience cannot follow more than three messages. Neither can you.
- 3 Use AI to research before you go on.** Five minutes with ChatGPT, Claude, or Perplexity beats an hour of clicking around. Ask for 15 likely questions including 3 tough ones, then practice the answers out loud.
- 4 Have a "killer" first answer ready.** The opener is almost always some version of "tell us what this is about." Land the first 30 to 90 seconds and the rest of the interview gets easier.
- 5 Energy, energy, energy.** The audience feels flat energy in 10 seconds and tunes out. If you are not excited about your topic, nobody on the other end will be either.
- 6 Move your hands, head, and body.** Stand up if you can. Stiff guests look nervous, and nervous guests look untrustworthy. It changes the quality of your voice even on the phone.
- 7 Have a point of view.** Hosts and reporters love a guest who takes a side. Wishy-washy guests do not get invited back. Strong-opinion guests do.
- 8 Be quotable in complete sentences.** If a sentence would not make sense pulled out of context, rework it. The same rule serves a reporter, a 30-second clip, and an AI answer.
- 9 Plug like a pro.** Weave in a resource the audience actually wants instead of blurting a URL. Hosts mention a resource twice. They mention a bare URL once, or not at all.
- 10 Ask for the file before you record.** The clip, the audio, the raw video. Most producers and hosts say yes when you ask up front, and it stays a credibility asset for years.
- 11 Assume you are always on the record.** Chitchat before and small talk after are included, and the mic or camera may already be live.

Television IN STUDIO OR OVER ZOOM

- 1 Lean forward 15 degrees.** Toward the camera or the interviewer. It reduces the "camera adds 10 pounds" effect and signals engagement.
- 2 Look at the interviewer, not the camera.** That is the rule for sit-downs. On a satellite or remote hit where the host is in another city, the lens IS the host. Confirm which one you are doing with the producer.

- 3 Get the remote setup right.** Light on your face, not behind you. Camera at eye level. Wired ethernet over Wi-Fi. A real microphone over laptop audio. A real wall over a virtual background, which warps every time you move.
- 4 Wear solids.** Not pure white, pure black, or bright red. Blues, greens, and grays read best on camera. Nothing shiny or noisy near the lavalier mic.

Radio and audio STUDIO, REMOTE, OR PHONE

- 1 Email the producer 5 to 10 bullet points.** Most will use it as their interview guide. You just shaped the questions before they were written.
- 2 Keep the grid in front of you.** Radio is the easiest format for notes. They cannot see you.
- 3 Do not sound like you are reading.** The grid is a guide, not a script. Glance, deliver, look up. A listener hears "reading voice" within five seconds.
- 4 Use a real microphone and headphones.** A USB mic in the \$100 range clears the bar. Headphones stop the host's voice bleeding back through your mic.
- 5 Offer a takeaway.** What will the listener remember when they pull into the driveway? One clear, useful idea beats a flood of average ones.
- 6 Confirm the night before and kill the noise.** Doorbell, dog, kids, dishwasher, phone notifications. If you are remote, warn the household 30 minutes ahead.

Podcasts LONG-FORM, AND USUALLY ON VIDEO

- 1 Listen to a full episode before you say yes.** You learn the pacing, whether the host interrupts, and whether their audience is your audience. If it is not a fit, pass politely.
- 2 Send a "make me look smart" sheet.** Three or four bullets: the angles you can speak to, a surprising stat or story, and the one thing you want listeners to walk away with. Most hosts use it as their prep.
- 3 Have 3 to 5 stories ready.** Stats fade. Stories get clipped, quoted, and shared. Tie each story to one of your three categories so it does double duty.
- 4 Audio quality is non-negotiable.** A real USB mic, not a laptop and not earbuds. Headphones on. Record in a soft room rather than a kitchen full of hard surfaces.
- 5 Treat video as live, even on "audio-only" shows.** Most podcasts publish video clips now. Camera at eye level, light on your face, plain background, lean slightly forward.
- 6 Follow up within 24 hours.** Thank the host and name the 60-second moment you think would make a good clip. Low-maintenance, high-promotion guests get invited back and referred.

Print and online REPORTERS, TRADE PRESS, NEWS SITES

- 1 Reporters want one thing: quotes.** Short, tight, self-contained answers that survive being pulled out of context. They are hunting for a line to highlight, not a lecture.
- 2 Write out your ideal answers first.** What would you love to see in print? Write those exact sentences. Reporters often use them word for word. That is professional, not scripted.
- 3 Practice once, out loud.** With someone playing the reporter. Record it and listen back. The first interview should not be the real one.
- 4 When you hear typing, slow down.** They are transcribing your quote. The silence is a green light. Give them room to capture it cleanly.
- 5 Give them your one-sentence description of yourself.** They almost always print it word for word, so do not leave it to chance. Write it once and use it every time.
- 6 If a reporter calls cold, buy ten minutes.** "I am absolutely available. Can I call you back in ten minutes?" That is enough time to write your grid and a first answer. Loop in your communications person if you have one.

Social and short-form video

LINKEDIN LIVE, TIKTOK, REELS

- 1 Know the platform before you say yes.** A LinkedIn Live audience wants frameworks and credibility. A TikTok audience wants energy. Same expert, different delivery.
- 2 Be quotable in 30-second chunks.** Clips get pulled from your interview whether you plan them or not, so bake the soundbites in.
- 3 Give helpful, specific facts.** "Most people make this mistake" is forgettable. A real number attached to a real observation is shareable. Specificity is what makes content quote-worthy.
- 4 Treat camera, lighting, and audio like TV.** Most social interviews are video now, and bad light or bad sound is the fastest way to look amateur.
- 5 Offer something the host can pin.** A checklist or a guide the audience actually wants. The host will mention it on air and pin it in the comments. Bare URLs get ignored.
- 6 Every clip is part of your AI footprint.** These get transcribed, indexed, and fed back into AI training data. Years from now, models will quote what you said today.

Remote video tours 10 TO 20 HITS IN ONE MORNING

- 1 Treat your setup like a TV studio.** Camera at eye level. A ring light and a window at minimum. Wired ethernet. A real microphone. Tested twice the day before, not 10 minutes before the first hit.
- 2 Sit on the edge of your seat.** Lean forward 15 degrees and hold it. It projects engagement on camera.
- 3 Keep your hands in the upper half of your chest.** That is the camera's frame. Gestures below the sternum are invisible. Above the shoulders looks frantic.

- 4 Hit 14 matters as much as hit 1.** Fatigue kills tours. Stand up between hits, drink water, take a 30-second reset before the next station joins.
- 5 Slight TV smile during questions.** It reads pleasant instead of nervous, especially during your introduction, which is where most people freeze.
- 6 Fix a popped earpiece during your own answer.** Never during the host's question. Handled smoothly, most viewers never notice.
- 7 Say "Thanks" on the welcome and the sign-off.** Silence reads as awkward. Two words read as polished. And assume you are still on camera until the producer confirms you are clear.
- 8 Have a local reference for each market.** "It is great to be with your Dallas viewers this morning" lands harder than a generic open. AI gives you one local hook per market in 30 seconds.

Getting quoted by AI CHATGPT, PERPLEXITY, CLAUDE

- 1 Define your terms.** Open with a one-sentence definition, then the example. That structure is exactly what a model extracts and repeats.
- 2 Use specific numbers, names, and examples.** "More than 5,000 TV segments" gets cited. "A lot of TV" does not.
- 3 Repeat the same one-sentence bio every time.** When the identical sentence turns up across dozens of interviews, AI treats it as authoritative and uses it verbatim.
- 4 Get cited on sites AI trusts.** One quote in a major outlet, a trade publication, or a university site beats fifty on a random blog.
- 5 Make your own site machine-readable.** Clear titles, FAQ sections, a bio with structured data, and real text rather than images of text.
- 6 Correct a wrong paraphrase in the moment.** "I would actually phrase that as..." A bad paraphrase you let stand gets indexed forever.
- 7 Be findable for the questions you want.** Think about what someone would type into ChatGPT to find an expert like you, then make sure your published content uses those phrases. Present, not stuffed.
- 8 Test yourself monthly, and do not game it.** Ask ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, and Gemini who you are. If the answer is wrong or missing, you know what to fix. The expert who shows up most often is the one who actually shows up most often.

The full guides

Every rule here is drawn from the seven Media Training Toolkit guides at successinmedia.com/media-training-toolkit, where each format is covered in full, with the AI research prompts written out.