

Guidelines for Radio Interviews



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0845 300 1818

Radio is a powerful medium through which to spread the word on the Movement's fun-packed Programme of adventurous activities and challenges. With more digital stations coming online and radio audience figures increasing, it's important to get involved in radio work.

An interview is likely to be conducted in one of the following ways:

- *Entertaining* - Friendly, chatty; Daytime Magazine.
- *Informal* – Passing on information.
- *News item* - On-the-spot, sound bite; the most likely scenario is usually due to an incident occurring.
- *Emotional* – Missing person.
- *Hard* - More in depth, and on a particular topic. Paxman/Politician

It's wise to discuss the offer of a radio interview, with the Media Team and your Media Development Manager.

As a Member of Scouting, you may be asked to comment on a particular newsworthy topic; an interview is usually conducted at very short notice. It can be positive, showing Scouting as a useful part of the community; it can also be negative, due to an incident or mishap. In the event of a mishap or incident, it is crucial to refer the interview to the Media Team at Gilwell Park, and its 24-hour emergency cover on 0845 3001818 or 0208 4337100.

Your focus should be the positive, promotional side of Scouting.

Selecting the right Scouting voice

As the UK's largest co-educational *youth* organisation, it makes sense to use our trained Young Spokespeople (YSP) to represent the Movement wherever possible. The Media Team will assist here and discuss how to 'steer' the interview along the lines you wish.

Clearly, 'infectious enthusiasm' is a must for interviewees. While it may not be relevant for a hard news story or national coverage, getting young people themselves into the studio to discuss their latest escapades can be a good laugh and lots of fun!

Remember, if the interview is recorded, rather than live, not everything you say will be used. Think about news bulletins - only about ten seconds of an interview is used, at most. Be concise. If you have a specific point to make, be sure to get it across. Don't be afraid to repeat yourself. Try to think of sound bites - make your sentences 'stand-alone'. There is no point in giving your key message if it takes five minutes to explain what you mean!

Clarify your thoughts in advance by focusing on *three key messages* you wish to convey about Scouting. Keep them simple, and be positive! Scouting is fun!

We have developed detailed advice on how to project the Scout brand, Challenge, Adventure and Fun, which is available through contact with Gilwell's Media Team or your local MDM.

Be Prepared

Find out as much as possible before the interview.

- *Build a friendly working relationship* with the researcher or radio station contact. It's your route to providing information to the presenter, and a way of getting more information used on air.
- *Listen to the programme* to see how the interview is likely to be conducted. To get a flavour of how the show is proceeding, tune in to it prior to your interview. Don't forget to listen to its audience too! Popular technology such as iPlayer, makes this a very easy task.
- Get the interviewer or presenter's name.

- Ask in advance if the interviewer has been a member or has *Scouting links*.
- Find out if it's a one-to-one, or if other people are involved. Request the names and a brief of other participants and organisations represented.
- What is your *angle or hook*? Is your event the biggest, smallest; involving the youngest or oldest? Mention something funny or sad; is the event famous, imminent or controversial?
- Decide on *three key messages* to get across in the interview.
- Be bright, concise and enthusiastic; boredom thresholds tend to be low for presenter and listener.
- *Prepare and practice* your key answers and key points. *Rehearse* in front of a mirror! *Record* yourself to see how you sound - you may need to slow down!
- Provide the radio station with local web details, a contact name and number or e-mail in case of subsequent enquiries. Or mention www.scouts.org.uk and the Information Centre on 0845 300 1818. *Mention it on air*. It's a perfect pitch for any help or support you are currently seeking.
- Ask for the interviewer's first question in advance to be suitably prepared and ask if they can give other questions too, or indicate what else may be raised.
- *Paint a picture* of Scouting in your area i.e. how many members or Groups; whether it is growing; what Scouting is involved in i.e. expeditions or other events. Look at FS295405 Facts and Figures about Scouting, see <http://www.scoutbase.org.uk/library/hqdocs/facts/pdfs/fs295405.pdf>. It will provide content for the item and help in forming your own local Scouting facts and figures.
- Focus immediate attention at Scouting's modern aims i.e. Scouting is a *co-educational, ever-growing, worldwide* Movement. Bring up approaching World Jamborees or other big events. Don't hesitate to mention anything of

significance Scouting-wise in your part of the world.

- Mention the *fun factor* in Scouting. For example, talk about the opportunities it provides for forging new friendships, how it boosts the individual's confidence in many different ways, from learning new skills to mixing and camping alongside unfamiliar people who quickly become friends.
- Be prepared for the unexpected!
- More and more *employers* have discovered the skills learned as a Scout, such as leadership, teamwork, self-reliance and the ability to effectively communicate, and consider them *valuable tools in the workplace* for existing and potential employees. Refer to the yearning of employers to hire someone with such benefits, making *Scouts very desirable candidates in the job market*.
- Most important of all, enjoy the interview - and *smile!* A smile lightens and brightens the voice and is carried as if by magic over the airwaves!

Interview techniques

It is often in the media's best interest to get you relaxed, so you don't appear stilted and nervous.

They may try to catch you out by asking a loaded question, such as "Scouts have been injuring themselves needlessly in the mountains for years - how dangerous do you think mountaineering really is?"

It is tempting to ignore the first part of the statement, and simply answer mountaineering is not dangerous. However, this may be seen as agreeing with the statement. *You must answer each portion of the question*: the first part, as well as the direct question - "Before I answer your question, may I first point out mountaineering is an enjoyable and important part of the Scout Programme, and has been for many years. We have people trained to take Scouts into the mountains, and firmly established rules and procedures governing what they do."

This answers the question, and clears up any misconception in assuming mountaineering is needless. It is an example of an A, B and C response. See the next section for more.

Remember A, B & Cs

Remember your A, B and Cs, namely:

- A - Acknowledge
- B - Bridge &
- C - Control.

For example:

- A - "That's a very interesting question.
- B - "However, the point I would like to make is ...
- C - Your key message. Cue for taking *control* of the interview, putting it firmly back on track so you can give one of your key messages.

Steer the interview onto the messages you wish to give. Stay on-task.

Multi-questions:

The interviewer may ask you a number of questions at once, which can seem confusing and daunting. *Ask them to repeat their questions one by one*, to give you a chance to answer each fully.

If the interviewer focuses on an aspect you are unsure of, tell them you are not the best person to speak to on that issue. *Do not try to bluff.*

Facts and Figures:

Quotes and statistics can be used out of context, so be careful and moderate your answers. They may try to get you to agree to a certain view, only to pull out a fact or figure showing you are wrong. For example:

Q "It has been said women Leaders aren't as capable as men. What do you say to that?"

A "Well, that's obviously nonsense. They are every bit as capable as a man. Whoever said that is wrong."

Q "Your HQ is on record saying women are not as physically capable as men. Are they wrong?"

It would be wiser to say something like this:

Q "It has been said women Leaders aren't as capable as men. What do you say to that?"

A "*In my experience* women Leaders have proved to be just as capable as men."

Jargon:

Avoid abbreviations such as DC, CC, GSL, ACSL, which will mean nothing to listeners who are not familiar with Scouting. Use simple everyday terms and language. To the general public, an adult is a Scout Leader, and a young person is a Scout.

Interruptions:

The interviewer may interrupt you if they feel they aren't getting the answer they want. Don't be put off. Simply stop what you were saying until they

finish, then go back to your point - cue A, B and C - Acknowledge, Bridge and Control. *Avoid becoming aggressive*, as you may come across as defensive.

Silence and stare:

The interviewer may stay silent once you have given your answer in the hope you will begin to talk again, and give information you didn't intend to reveal. To avoid this, *stay silent once you have finished*, and the interviewer will ask another question.

Knowledge:

The interviewer and listeners may have some knowledge of the subject; they could even be a Leader. If you try to baffle them with science, you risk being caught out. *Ask in advance* if the interviewer has been a member or has Scouting links.

Thanks

Remember to say thank you for the opportunity to hit the airwaves and remind them to bear you in mind for future occasions; drop them a thank you note or an e-mail and make sure they *have your contact details for future reference*. Building an on-going friendly working relationship with the researcher or radio station contact will bear fruit. Keep in touch and offer them appropriate stories on a regular basis; and seek other local radio outlets through which to pitch Scouting stories. Your local profile and that of Scouting is bound to increase!

Review

Review your interview. You will be surprised at how much can be learnt from listening to your performance - and it will help in preparing you to make the most of your next radio interview!

Many thanks to Dr Tony Andrews, National Commissioner for Activities, from whose notes these points were adapted.