

## Tips for pitching a story:



### Reach Out

Sending things to a specific person is better, since general inboxes can get ignored. Contact journalists through their work email, phone number, or their professional social media profiles. You can sometimes find these linked in their stories, or just by searching online.



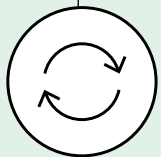
### Follow-up

If you don't hear back from a media outlet within a reasonable amount of time, send another message or try contacting them through a different channel. Just don't spam them!



### Track Responses

Keep a list of people's contact information, when you reached out, and their response. This tracks who is interested in your story, so you know who to connect with in the future.



Remember: Getting media to notice your story can take a few tries.

## Journalist Codes of Conduct

Organizations like the Canadian Association of Broadcasters ([cbasc.ca](http://cbasc.ca)) or the Radio and Television News Directors Association ([rtndacanada.com](http://rtndacanada.com)) have codes of ethics that journalists are expected to follow. It's possible that individual media outlets have formal or informal standards and practices that are often available to the public.

Researching these ahead of time might help you feel more prepared for what to expect from talking to the media.

## Filing a Complaint

If you are every unhappy with how a media outlet covered an issue, here are some ways you can try and file a complaint:

1. You can write a letter to the outlet outlining your concerns.
2. If they don't respond to a letter, you can contact the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council ([cbasc.ca](http://cbasc.ca)) for radio or television complaints, or a regional press council ([nmc-mic.ca](http://nmc-mic.ca)) for newspaper complaints.
3. And if that doesn't get a response, consider contacting an elected representative (city counsellor, MPP/MLA, MP, etc).

Hopefully this opens up a conversation with a media outlet to correct any errors or improve their coverage on a topic.



**Action Canada**  
for Sexual Health & Rights

# Pitching and Prepping for Media Coverage

Talking to the media can help raise awareness on an issue, gain public support for a cause, or correct the record on mis- and disinformation, especially to people outside of your regular communities.

This pamphlet has some basic tips and tricks for pitching a story and talking to the media on issues that matter to you!

## Questions to ask yourself before pitching a story to the media

### 1 What is the story you want to tell?

Having your key messages ready can help guide where, how, and to who you want to pitch your story. Ask yourself, why should people care about this issue, and how can this story help them push for change?

### 2 Who has told stories about this before?

Finding other media stories about your cause can help you get a sense of which outlets or journalists would be interested in what you have to say, or who to avoid.

### 3 Who is the audience you want to reach?

Different media outlets talk to different audiences, (e.g., if you want politicians to notice you, maybe seek out media that politicians are known to pay attention to). For more information on media training check out [mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca).



Scan this QR code to learn more about sexual health.

## You've landed an interview...now what?

### 1 Research the Interviewer or Media Outlet

See how they've spoken about your topic before. It can help you know what kinds of questions they might ask, or what things you can bring up that you know they'll be interested in.

### 2 Ask Questions About the Interview

Ask things like: "Where will this be published? When will it go out? Who else are you interviewing?, etc ..."

### 3 Remember your Key Messages

What is the one thing you want people to remember about what you said? Try to write this out ahead of time, and/or bring along an Advocacy Brief to help you stay on message (or leave behind with the interviewer).

### 4 Practice

Doing practice interviews with friends or colleagues can help you get better at staying on message. But don't do too much – It's good to be comfortable, but not over-rehearsed.

### 5 Know Your Rights

Journalists are supposed to follow industry and/or institutional codes of ethics. Learning what these are can help you know what to expect from interviewers, and recognize if things take a turn. More info on these on the back of this pamphlet!

## What (Not) to Say

5 things to keep in mind during an interview:

### 1 Everything is Recorded

Anything you do or say in front of a microphone or camera, and even anything that happens "off the record," informs a story.

### 2 Be Easy to Understand

- Speak slowly and clearly so people can understand your message.
- Assume people don't know your issue. Avoid terms, jargon, or slang that most people aren't familiar with.

### 3 Stay on Message

Try to avoid tangents (or jokes) that aren't related to your key messages. If you feel like you're starting to drift, you can always say "Back to what I'd really like to focus on today..."

### 4 Stick to the Facts

Avoid exaggerating, guessing, or answering hypotheticals. Sticking to facts and your key messages keeps things strong. You can always look up information and provide it later if necessary.

### 5 It's Okay to Not Answer Questions (Politely)

You can decline to answer questions you don't know the answer to or don't want to talk about. Even better, try pivoting back your key messages by saying "I don't know that, but what I'd really like to talk about today is..."