



MEDIA TOOLKIT

Let's Get in the News! - Media Tips and Tricks



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Why using the media is important.

Stories move us, spring us into action, cause us to reflect on how things are, reckon with how they need to change, and so much more. When we tell our stories we make our movement visible, and catch the attention of the media and the general public.

For many organisations, gaining positive and consistent coverage in the media can have an incredible impact on the work we do.

It can have a multiplier effect on the good work that groups are doing. If people know what you have achieved and what you do, they are more likely to support your group. The more support you get, the more likely you are to have a bigger impact.

Telling stories through the media allows you to reach audiences in where you live and beyond, bring new people into your campaign, increase public support, and grow the movement at scale with what the crisis requires.

While it is important that groups don't become obsessed about getting media attention as a bigger priority than actually doing the work they do, it can make a difference

It's also important, especially if the media are going to report on a story anyway, that you **get your voice in the media and an opportunity to tell your story in your words.**

And remember, it doesn't always go right- there are sometimes bad articles, mis quotes, an interview doesn't go very well, a journalists traps you into saying something you didn't mean to. It can be tough but looking after each other, giving critical and supportive feedback, and sharing the workload are really important.

This media toolkit walks through how we use the news to communicate our power, campaigns and the climate movement with the world.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Media Work

As we continuously work to become more diverse, equitable and inclusive in our organizing, here are some tips everyone should take into account in our media & communications work:



- *Bring partners' stories in their own words to the media:* open up space for partners to write their own stories and speak for themselves. This ensures that their work is not filtered through our own biases.
 - [Check out this Centering Equity in Storytelling training](#) on best practices, including practicing *credit, consultation, and consent*,
- *Ensure partners are central to the narrative-crafting process:* having a partner be involved in the media work, not just as spokespeople, but as strategic allies, allows us to build authentic relationships, collaboration, inclusion and trust.
- *Invest in local media networks, trainings and partnerships:* justice & equity starts with recognizing that not all of us are starting out with the same resources.
 - This means a consistent practice and openness to sharing press relationships, investing in various types and levels of media and spokesperson training, and supporting the work of groups across movements for justice.
- *Find Speaking opportunities for partners:* support and amplify partners' voices instead of speaking for them.
- *Think about your own personal storytelling:* talk to your networks and other volunteers about ethical storytelling so they feel trained and supported on how to do this work ethically. Here is a resource on how to tell stories on social media and check your own biases:
- *Empowerment & Resilience; NOT tokenizing poverty:* emphasize resilience and the communities' agency over solving climate related problems when addressing issues of poverty and climate change. Don't just focus on the negative address how partners are seeking and implementing solutions to the challenges they face. Emphasize human resilience in general.
- *Invest in authentic and quality content partnerships:* investing in strong partnerships where media outreach is collaborative leads to incredible joint work and growth for our partners and ourselves.

Let's get to work!

Messages and Talking Points

When you are dealing with the media it's a good idea to make a list of your key messages and talking points. This is the way that we can tell our stories and also make sure that we get the right messages out there.



➔ **When thinking about your key messages these five principles can help you present them.**

1. *Speak to people's best self* - Appeal to the good, compassionate sides of people and respect their journey on the issue. The audience aren't your villain so don't paint them as the problem
2. *Create common ground* - Find the identity and values you share with your audience e.g. they're likely to have young people in their life who they care about and want the best for.
3. *Talk about change* - explain the problem but also present your solution - talk about your demands)
4. *Embed facts in stories* - Don't rely on facts and figures alone - appeal to people emotionally rather than rationally, put a human face on the issue.
5. *'Try not to respond directly to your opponents claims'* - Use your frames, with your values, your vision.

Good Messages are also

- *Concise*: Focus on three to five key messages per topic; write one to three sentences for each key message; should be read or spoken in 30 seconds or less.
- *Strategic*: Define, differentiate, and address benefits.
- *Relevant*: Balance what you need to communicate with what your audience needs to know.
- *Simple*: Use easy-to-understand language; avoid jargon and acronyms.
- *Memorable*: Ensure that messages are easy to recall and repeat; avoid long, run-on sentences.
- *Real*: Use active voice, not passive; do not use advertising slogans.

➔ **For example**

- Climate change is all around us: intensifying storms, hurricanes, heatwaves and wildfires, as well as slow-burning disasters like drought and famine - all of which hit vulnerable communities the worst. There's no time to lose in the fight for climate justice.
- The School Strikes movement began in August 2018 when Swedish school girl Greta Thunberg went on strike, since then the movement has spread across the globe.
- This moment is a unique opportunity to create a roaring upswell of public support for the ambitious climate solutions we need at all levels of government worldwide.
- We are not starting from scratch. By building broad community support, we will further strengthen



Worksheet 1

Come up with 4 key messages for your school strike. Try using the following guide to frame them.

- What is the problem
- What is the impact that is having
- What is the way forward in addressing it
- What are you doing about it?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Interviews

→Types of interview

On the ground - this is generally when you're being interviewed by a presenter at the site of, or close to, the news story eg interviews outside a town hall or at a protest.

Down the line - A down the line interview (for broadcast) means when you are in a remote location doing an interview to camera or on the radio whilst the presenter is in the studio somewhere else.

In studio - An in studio style interview, takes place in the studio with the presenter. Generally on a one-on-one scenario but sometimes there is also another guest



How to tackle each

On the ground:

- Try and stand relaxed, with your hands rested in front of you
- Look at the presenter when responding to their questions, don't look at the camera (unless it's 'down the line')
- Not too many big gestures or hand movements, it's possible only the top half of you will be on-screen
- Don't get up until you're told to once the interview has finished.

Down the line:

- Maintain focus. Always look directly into the camera.
- Remember to smile, or at least look friendly!
- Not too many big gestures or hand movements, only top half of you will be on-screen.
- Stay in your seat, looking straight at the camera until you are told the interview is finished.

In studio:

- Try and appear relaxed, legs cross at the ankle, hands loose in your lap, shoulders back and smiling (if appropriate).
- Look at the presenter when responding to their questions, don't look at the cameras.
- Try not to move around too much in your seat.
- Don't get up until you're told to once the interview has finished.
- Don't forget you are mic'd up!

With all of them, take a deep breath, speak more slowly than you would normally - remember what the message you have to say is.

→ Dealing with tricky questions

As young people you're less likely to have an interviewer try and trip you up. But sometimes they do throw tricky questions. When that happens the best thing to do is try a tactic called ABC: 'Acknowledge, Bridge, Communicate'.

Essentially you **acknowledge** their point, **bridge** away from it and **communicate** what you want to say. Politicians do this a lot, and it's annoying when they do but less so when ordinary people try it. You can do that using some basic phrases like the ones listed below:

1. I see that, but ... (key message)



2. What I'm most worried about is ...
3. People have said that but...
4. I think the real question most people are asking is ...
5. I think the real question we should be asking is ...
6. I'd also like to add that ...
7. What's important to remember is ...
8. To put this in perspective ...

[Check out this training on giving interviews and being a spokesperson.](#)

Worksheet 2

Come up with a list of questions that you might get asked during an interview- here are some ideas to get you started.

Why are you here?

What do you hope to achieve?

Who do you want to listen to you?

What are you going to do next?

What do you want to happen next?

Do you think there's a better way than skipping your education?

Trickier ones

The stats show we've cut our carbon massively, doesn't that show we're already doing pretty well?

There's not many of you here today, does that show there's not much interest amongst other young people?

Do you really think politicians will listen?

Shouldn't you be in school?



Are you being made to do this by your parents?

Press Outreach and Pitching

Once you have a grasp on the story you want to tell, who's going to tell it, and how you want to get it out in the world, you can start the work of reaching out and connecting with the press. This direct outreach is the initial step needed insert our story into the current conversation.

→ Press List

As is true with organizing and movement work, **relationship building** is top priority when working with reporters and the press.

At the onset of your campaign, focus on quality over quantity of press relationships. While we want strive to get our stories across, it's also key to find out what stories the reporter is actually interested in! This can be done through one-on-one conversations, meetings over coffee or a meal, as well as simply passing along additional information.

Ideally, you want to have a symbiotic relationship with reporters where you are providing stories they can cover, and they are covering the stories you want to tell! [Learn more about understanding journalists here.](#)

Focus on a range of mediums, including print, online, TV, radio, blogs, and more! You want to build relationships with journalists across a range of platforms to reach the widest audience.

Find contact information by going to the news outlet website, search for twitter accounts, or simply calling up the newsdesk to ask who the best climate reporter is.

Track your press contacts in a spreadsheet, with information including:

First Name	Last Name	Outlet	Role	Email	Phone	Social Media	Notes
Dale	Ellis	Town News	Local News	dale.ellis@town.com	Cell: ## Work: ##	twitter.com/dale	Personal stories

[Here are more tips & tricks for building relationships with the press.](#)

→ Pitching

When pitching to a reporter, be sharp, quick and to the point. Ahead of reaching out to the press, it's useful to outline or draft your ideal **30 second** pitch. *I-P-S-U-A* is a great tool in helping craft a press pitch:



- **Introduction:** 1 sentence; who you are, what group you're with, why you're reaching out;
- **Problem:** 1-2 sentences; the problem we're faced with
- **Solution:** 1-2 sentences; the solutions we have, people power
- **Urgency:** 1 sentence; explains the timeliness and urgency of climate change, worsening impacts;
- **Action:** 1 sentence; what's happening and where is the action



Press Materials

→ Media advisory

Media advisories alert press of an upcoming event, whether it's a march, a rally or a press briefing. Think of it as an invitation. The goal of an advisory is to grab the reader's interest and make them want to come. Ask yourself: *What's the hook that makes it a do-not-miss event?*

Don't get caught up in long descriptions; **keep it to one page, this is more of a teaser.**

Send about a week before your event. Follow up with phone calls to really sell your event a few days beforehand to be sure journalists have enough time to include it in their schedule.

→ Media Advisory Template

MEDIA ADVISORY

DATE

Contact: [NAME], [POSITION], [EMAIL], [PHONE]

TITLE: 1000's of school kids to strike

Sub-title: [Offer topline details and overview specific to your action]

CITY, STATE -- On [Add date] [Name groups/participants] will be [describe activity] as part of the the school strikes movement

WHAT: Add a short one-phrase description of your school strike

WHEN: Add date and time of the event, in the following format: Day of the Week, Month, Day, Time (specify time zone)

WHERE: Add the location of the event

WHO: Add names/groups (and titles, if applicable) of those carrying out the event followed by an explanation/description of those involved.

WHY: Use a couple of your key messages for this part

VISUALS: Describe what eye-catching elements might be present (i.e. banners, chants, songs, street theater, etc).

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For more information, contact XXXXXXXX

Press releases are what your ideal article for an event would look like. The goal is to give reporters all the information they would need to write a story, even if they didn't show up.

Aim to keep your press release to one page.

Once it's written, send the press release individually – or make sure to use "bcc"! When sending out the press release to your contacts via email, the subject line is your headline. Copy and paste the rest of your release into the body of the email, and bring print copies to your event to give to members of the press who attend.



Usually, your press release goes out immediately after your event but you can send it out embargoed before an event so you can get media that day.

→ **Press release template:**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Contact: [name], [role/organization], [email address], [phone number]

Title: Ideal headline describing what happened at your *School Strike* mobilisation

Subtitle: Tens of thousands of people in school strike to showcase real climate leadership and step up pressure on governments ahead of the Global Climate Action Summit in September.

[INSERT FEATURED IMAGE IF RELEVANT]

CITY, STATE -- On [add date] [name participants/groups] took part in [describe activity] as part of the growing movement for school strikes [Add sentence on local/regional focus of the mobilisation and the outcomes in a local/regional context].

"[Add quote 1] This quote should be from a spokesperson who had a role in organizing the strike about the importance of the strike

Add general background information on the strike behind the local/regional *Rise for Climate* action - explain who participated and role they had.

"[Add quote 2] This quote should be from another (if possible) organizer of your action. This quote should summarize the purpose, impact and importance the mobilisation had at a local/regional level." recounts XXX.

Keep it less than a page

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[You can find more on the purpose, distribution timing and examples of press materials here.](#)

Op-eds, Letters to the Editor

Opinion-Editorials (op-eds) and Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are great ways for us to create our own content and tell our stories in the media.



News outlets publish them as a venue for public debate or to discuss issues missed by the regular news. They need to be written with a clear opinion and are published at the editor's discretion.

→ **Before you begin writing**

- **Pay attention to submission requirements** (word length, how to submit). You can find this information on the news outlets' website.
- **Read other opinion/LTEs** in that news outlet to get a sense of the pieces they publish and the criteria they use.
- If you have a relationship, **call or discuss the opinion piece with the editor** before submitting. For example, sometimes editors feel a story or particular angle has been exhausted and may indicate the need for a fresh angle (See [How to Build a Positive Relationship with Press](#)).

→ **How to write an attractive letter to the editor/op-ed**

- **Connect it with something that is already happening in the news.** Reference a former article that the newspaper wrote, or an event that happened in the community. Then link it to what you want to talk about (See [Framing Climate Change as News: Lessons from The Guardian](#)).
- **Keep your key message at the top.** This allows readers to understand your position early on, and sometimes editors may cut out the last part of your letter.
- **Make sure each sentence has its own purpose.** Since we don't have all the space in the world to explain ourselves, make sure every sentence makes its own statement and avoids being repetitive.
- **Make sure you know your message**, what you want to say, and use clear and simple language—short words and sentences go a long way!
- **If you have a strong personal story, include it!** A compelling human story helps to hook editors and readers.
- **Proofread!**

→ **Letters To the Editor (LTEs)**

- Typically short piece (< 300 words); can be used as a comment on a piece the outlet already published.

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→ **Opinion-editorials (op-eds):**

- Might be longer than an LTE, 800 - 1200 words
- Examples
 - [Think we should be at school?](#) School striker opinion piece 15th March 2019

[You can find additional op-ed and LTE templates, tips, tricks & more resources here](#)



On the day

→Media Wrangling

This is someone who, during an action, handles the press, connecting them to sources and giving them background information. This does not have to be the spokesperson, but someone who is willing to seek press during actions and make sure they are getting the information they need.

Tasks:

- Know which reporters you're looking for
- Bring printed press releases and/or be ready to forward it from your phone
- Connect press with appropriate spokespeople
- Chat with them about the campaign, be friendly, get them on your side
- Get updated press contact info
- If appropriate, send follow up answers to questions

→Taking photographs/videos

Make sure there is someone committed to taking photographs and videos. The media often need a couple of photos fairly quickly if they are going to run the story.

Think about how to make the photo interesting, what's in the background? Does it convey the message? Is it high enough resolution for print media (300 pixels for inch) Have you checked that everyone is happy to be in the photo?

[More information on taking good photos here](#)

Worksheet 3

Who is doing what for your next event:

- Agree key messages
- Develop press list
- Write Media Advisory



- Write Press Release
- Send Media Advisory
- Prepare Your Spokespeople
- Get a few good photos to accompany press release
- Send Press Release
- Media Wrangling on the day
- Gather and Share Press Hits
- Organise a feedback meeting about work well and what didn't

[Further details on this checklist and tasks can be found here.](#)

[Explore more tips & tricks on making your action NEWS-worthy.](#)

Additional trainings and resources

Explore more **media & communications resources** on the [350.org Trainings Page](#), including spokesperson training exercises, TV interview tips and tricks, spokespeople training, interview prep, and more!

If you would like more information or are interested in a 'online' media training, want help building press lists etc: get in contact kim.bryan@350.org