



Texas Society of Oral &  
Maxillofacial Surgeons

## Tips for Speaking with Reporters

A call from a local reporter can be a nerve-wracking experience for even the most media-savvy individuals. Following are a few tips to make the interview a more productive, and even pleasant, process.

1. ***If you are contacted by a reporter seeking an interview***, contact the TSOMS and the AAOMS. Both organizations have information, statistics and other material that will help you respond knowledgeably to questions and provide the reporter with further resources.
2. ***Always talk to reporters***. If you don't talk to them, they will write their story anyway, but without your input. Often, it will look like this: "Dr. Smith declined to comment," or "Dr. Jones did not return our phone calls."
3. ***Return the reporter's call promptly***. Ask what their deadline is, what kind of story they are doing.
4. ***If possible, schedule a future time for the interview***. This is important. You need time to do your research, gather your thoughts and prepare short, informative answers to potential questions.
5. ***Prior to the interview***, take some time to research other stories the reporter has written. You want to know their style and approach to the subjects they write about.
6. ***Take some time to list the key points you want to convey***. Consider possible questions that may be asked during the interview and develop some responses that highlight your key points. It's a good idea to develop three quotes you want to include in the article and have them at hand during the interview.
7. ***If possible, ask to record the interview***. If you are misquoted or your statements are misused, this recording may prove invaluable.
8. ***During the interview***
  - a. ***LISTEN to the questions***. Make sure you understand the question fully before you respond. Walking things back is difficult. Take the time to comprehend and THINK before you answer.
  - b. ***Be deliberate***. Speak slowly, clearly and confidently. Don't use technical or medical terms the public may be unfamiliar with. You aren't lecturing or speaking to a colleague – you are educating the reporter and the public at large. Use language that is relatable and easily understood – but don't speak down to them.
  - c. ***Use every opportunity to stress your key points***.
9. ***Do not assume anything is "off the record."*** The reported is doing his or her job. They may appear friendly and open, but they are not personal friends.
10. ***Don't worry about awkward silences***. Once you answer the questions STOP SPEAKING. Too often reporters will use silence as a way to get you to speak or say things you don't intend to say. Stick with your planned remarks.
11. ***After the interview***, ask to see the article before it is run. This will give you an opportunity to review and make sure you were quoted correctly.