



TIPS FOR PODCAST INTERVIEWS

Podcasts are an increasingly popular medium that offers a new way of connecting with an audience. From professional radio stations like *NPR*, to think tanks like Brookings, and even just your next-door neighbor, it seems like everyone has a podcast these days. While many of the tips for podcast interviews are similar to TV or radio interviews (check out our tip sheet on Radio and TV Interviews for more details), there are a few additional things you should keep in mind.

I. PODCASTS HAVE MANY FORMATS

There is no universal rule for how a podcast is structured. If you are invited to be a podcast guest, make sure to listen to a few episodes before coming on the show. This will give you a better sense of what they are looking for in a guest. For example, some podcasts feature short interviews with multiple guests, others can run as long as three hours, and others yet are heavily produced and only run snippets of previously recorded interviews. Understanding the format of the podcast will help you prepare for the conversation.

Most podcasts are not live. Unlike many TV or radio programs, podcasts are typically edited and produced before being released. This gives you the opportunity to re-do an answer if you are not happy with how it came out the first time or to suggest a different question if you can't speak to the one that was posed. Producers will often appreciate this as it gives them multiple versions to choose from, though make sure to only do this sparingly and ask first if it is alright to re-do an answer. Similarly, don't be afraid to take a short pause to collect your thoughts so you start out strong and answer the question clearly. This is good practice if you are prone to using filler language in your responses, see below for more.

II. PODCASTS ARE PERSONAL, BE PERSONAL

Podcasts are an inherently personal format. Hosts are in their listeners' ears, often with nothing but their voices and some music to guide them through the episode. When you are speaking on a podcast, make sure to have concrete examples and/or stories prepared to reinforce your point and engage the listener. Personal stories are especially powerful if you have them. Similarly, use visual and active language when you can. Paint a scene for the listener with your words. Describe what you are talking about in a way that allows the listener to imagine it.

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Don't be afraid to be personal, goofy, or laugh with the host. Speak the way you would to a friend and bring in a bit of your personality. These very human interactions often make for great audio and can help ensure that you don't sound too scripted.

III. IT'S AUDIO ONLY

Do your best to avoid "ums," "ahs," and lip smacks, these really stick out since podcasts are audio only. Practice can help you to avoid these common speaking habits. For example, practice telling a story and slow it down a lot so you can be very deliberate about not saying "um". Work with a friend or colleague and ask them to raise their hand every time you say this common filler word. You can also use a voice recorder app on your phone to record yourself and then listen back for some helpful self-critique.

Since podcasts are typically not live, you also don't have to rush to start speaking before you are ready. It's okay to be thoughtful about what you want to say before giving an answer. It's common to feel pressured to answer a question right away – this is when “ums” often creep in. Similarly, if you are a fast speaker, try to slow down a bit and take a breath at the end of each sentence. Podcast listeners only have your voice, there is no text scrolling at the bottom of the screen, no subtitles, and no images or video to help listeners follow along.

When recording for a podcast, make sure your settings will allow for the highest quality audio possible. Speak directly into the microphone and avoid tapping your fingers on a table, wearing loud jewelry, or shuffling papers. Make sure to find a quiet room to record in if you are not in a studio.

IV. GETTING ON A PODCAST

If you are interested in being on a podcast, the best thing to do is to start listening to them. There are over 500,000 podcasts according to Apple, with more being added every week. Use your podcast app of choice to find shows relevant to your expertise – most podcast apps allow you to search or filter by different topics. Reach out to the show's producer if you find a podcast that you like and that features outside guests (a large number of podcasts just have one commentator or a group of people discussing topics on a regular basis). Producers, not hosts, are typically in charge of planning the show and finding guests.

In your outreach, reference a previous episode or two you enjoyed; this shows the producer that you are familiar with the podcast and what they are looking for in a guest. If you have a recording (audio or video will work) of yourself speaking on a related topic, include this in the outreach, as it will demonstrate to the producer that you will be a good guest. Expect a call from a producer if they are interested in bringing you on. These “screener calls” help producers ensure that the potential guest will work for the show, so make sure you are prepared for such a call and come across clearly and professionally. And remember to check that you know how to properly pronounce the host's name in advance.