

What can I do to prepare for a local talk radio show interview?

Q: I have the chance to be interviewed on a local talk radio show. What can I do to prepare for this type of interview?

Since the show is local, listen several times in advance to learn more about the show's format and the host's style of interviewing. Consider the following: Does the show focus on a single issue, or on the guest's career? Are guests allowed time to expand on points they'd like to make, or will you be expected to give brief responses to questions? Does the show leave time for call-ins from listeners? Are guests interviewed alone or with other guests? Is the host prone to stirring controversy or asking tough questions? Who are the listeners at that time of day and what will interest them?

When you schedule the interview, ask whether it will be live or taped and find out what topics they expect to cover. If it is live, try to arrange to talk with the host for a few minutes in advance to establish a rapport before you go on the air. For a taped interview, keep in mind that portions may be cut. Tell the host which points you feel are most important either during the interview, or at the conclusion of the taping.

Before going on the air, review your material and make notes of key points you want to make. Flag pages of your book that you may want to refer to or quote from. Have someone quiz you in advance to help prepare for tough or tricky questions. Prepare a reply for questions you don't have an immediate response for, or cannot answer. Have a watch handy so you can pace yourself during the interview and keep a pad and pen within reach in case you want to make notes during the discussion.

Once you're on, be enthusiastic and informative. Take your cues from the host and be sensitive to their concerns. Don't treat their show as an advertising vehicle, but work mentions of your book into the conversation and tell them in advance if you'd like to mention an "800" number on the air. 9:10/92