



## Tips for Successful Radio Interviews

By Lorilyn Bailey

You received the call you've been waiting for! A radio producer has scheduled an interview to discuss your book, service, product, or issue that you want to promote. You know that discussing your topic on local, national, or even international radio is a cost-effective and fun way to share your news. You know that radio hosts worldwide have a constant need for interesting guests, and there's no reason you can't share the airwaves with them.

But can you do it? Of course you can--with a little preparation! Follow the tips below, and you'll be sure to have a great time as an on-air "personality."

### **Several Days before the Interview:**

1. When you schedule the interview, make sure you have written down the call letters of the station, the name of the city, the radio producer's name, the host's name, and the exact time (including the time zone) that the interview will take place.
2. Never do an interview "cold" if you aren't used to doing them.
3. If possible, provide the radio host with interview questions before the interview. This is a great timesaver for a radio producer, and even if they aren't used, they give the producer an idea of what you can discuss. (Note: For sample suggested interview questions, see any guest's page at: <http://www.guestfinder.com> )
4. Practice answering your questions. Put your answers on index cards. Don't write complete sentences; use simple words to jog your memory.
5. Have a summary sentence prepared to answer a question such as: "Do you have any final words of advice for us?"

6. Sometimes it's difficult to hear the host (if your interview isn't at the studio). Go to an electronics store, such as Radio Shack, and get a \$20 volume control for your phone. About the size of a small pack of cards, it fits between your handset and the phone and uses batteries.

### **The Day of the Interview:**

1. If you have a two-line phone, turn the ringer off the line you won't be using. Call the phone company to disable your "Call Waiting" feature.
2. Have a cup of hot coffee as well as a large glass of water available, in cups with tops. (Throats constrict, and cups spill.)
3. Have your index cards with answers to your questions in large legible handwriting spread out around your desk. Move your keyboard out of the way and turn off your computer.
4. If you know anyone in the listening audience, and it's a call-in show, have that person call in if response is slow.
5. Right before the interview, stand up, stretch, do deep breathing. Listen to your local talk radio station to get into the mood of "radio talk."
6. To avoid the jitters: Tell yourself how fortunate you are to be on the radio. Talk in a normal conversational voice directly to the interviewer; don't worry about anyone else listening.

### **During the Interview:**

1. Remember your job is to inform, educate, entertain, or inspire. The radio producer doesn't care about your product. The radio producer wants you simply to be an interesting guest for his or her audience, and that usually means providing the audience with useful information. If you offer useful information along with a little information about your product, that's acceptable. If you sound like a commercial for your product, that is not acceptable.
2. Don't drone. Speak one to three sentences at a time. If they want more explanation, they will usually encourage you. Some interviewers do all the talking. The good ones let you talk.
3. Don't say, "Umm." Practice the day before and have a friend count your "umms." They are very distracting.

4. At larger radio stations, they may record your voice and play just the parts they like(!). It may be a bit disconcerting because you can usually hear yourself being interviewed in bits and pieces. Just concentrate.
5. If the host has not mentioned by the end of the interview your Web site URL or where the listeners can get your book, product, or more information, jump in and say, "By the way, if anyone would like a copy of the book, the 800 number is 1-800-XXX-XXX or available at XYZ bookstore."
6. After the interview, write a thank you note to the producer and the hosts. Tell them that whenever they'd like to have you back, you'd love to be a guest. If you are on the Internet, (such as on GuestFinder.com), remind them of that so they can easily find you next time.

In 1995, Lorilyn Bailey created GuestFinder, <http://www.GuestFinder.com>, an Internet-based directory of more than 200 authors, experts, spokespersons, and entertainers who are available for radio, TV, and newspaper interviews.

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