



# MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

## Tip Sheet

### Written press

- When writing for media, whether print or online, ensure that you properly proofread your work and remove unnecessary words so your writing is concise and clear.
- Ask someone who is not involved in the campaign to read your press release or story to check that the message you want to get across is coming through clearly. In any case, always have at least two people look over your work to make sure you haven't missed any mistakes.
- Check out Born Free USA's template press release to guide you when writing a press release.
- Be sure that your headline catches attention!
- Research the publication that you would like to work with and reach out directly to journalists who have worked on your issue before. Placing an article with a direct contact is often more effective than sending out a blanket press release to dozens of publications.

- Local press is often easier to get into than national press. Try to find a local angle for your story and pitch to local news outlets. Conversely, if you are writing for national press, be sure that your story has a national “hook.”

## Radio and television

- Ensure that your spokesperson knows their subject and is confident in front of the camera or on the radio.
- Practice with a friend before the interview.
- If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, be honest. Tell the interviewer that you don’t know and move on. Remember that the interviewer is not trying to “catch you out.”
- If you need a moment to think before answering, take a few deep breaths and try not to use filler words to fill the silence. People will not notice your pause, but they will notice if your interview is filled with “eeeerrrrrs” and “hmmmmms!”
- If you feel nervous, if your voice is shaky, or you get stage fright, that’s okay! It’s normal to feel nervous but this will pass as you gain more experience. Take a sip of water and compose yourself by taking deep breaths.
- If the interview takes a turn that you are not expecting, it is fine to ask the interviewer to move back into an area you are comfortable with. You can say things like:
  - "That is outside of the scope of this issue, but I would love to tell you about..."
  - "That isn't really my area of expertise, but we have been doing some really interesting work on..."
  - "I believe there is great work being done on that issue but we are really focused on [...] right now."
- Remember: you know your subject matter better than anyone else! If you forget to say something, or you mess up a little, that’s fine. People don’t expect perfection, they are just interested in what you have to say!