

Interview Words, Phrases, & Thought Starters



- **Key Takeaway:** Use precise language to keep media focused on your message
 - **How to Use:** Choose some favorites for your interview toolbox
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Bridging Statements/Final Statements

- “And what’s most important to know is...”
- “However, what is more important to look at is...”
- “However, the real issue here is...”
- “And what this all means is...”
- “And what’s most important to remember is...”
- “With this in mind, if we look at the bigger picture...”
- “With this in mind, if we take a look back...”
- “If we take a broader perspective...”
- “If we look at the big picture...”
- “Let me put all this in perspective by saying...”
- “What all this information tells me is...”
- “Before we continue, let me take a step back and repeat that...”
- “Before we continue, let me emphasize that...”
- “This is an important point because...”
- “What this all boils down to...”
- “The heart of the matter is...”
- “What matters most in this situation is...”
- “And as I said before...”
- “And if we take a closer look, we would see...”
- “Let me just add to this that...”
- “I think it would be more correct to say...”
- “Let me point out again that...”
- “Let me emphasize again...”
- “In this context, it is essential that I note...”
- “Another thing to remember is...”
- “Before we leave the subject, let me add that...”
- “And that reminds me...”
- “And the one thing that is important to remember is...”
- “What I’ve said comes down to this...:”
- “Here’s the real issue...”
- “While...is important, it is also important to remember...”
- “It’s true that...but it is also true that...”
- “The key here is...”
- “It’s our practice not to share X, but here’s what I can tell you ...”
- “We don’t have all the final details yet, but here’s what I know now ...”

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General Q&A

Personal Opinions

- Q: "What do you know about X?"
- A: "I don't know about X, but what I can tell you about Y is ..."

- Q: "Critics say X about your [organization]."
- A: "I can't speak for them, but I do know that ..."

- Q: "X has said ... Do you agree?"
- A: "I can't speak for X. What I can tell you is ... (If you are not responsible for what the media is referring to.)"
- A: "I agree that ... (If you are responsible for what the media is referring to.)"

Guarantee/100% Assurance

- Q: "Can you guarantee this will never happen again?"
- A: "No. We aren't able to control every variable. What I can say with confidence is ... Let me give you one (or two) examples."
- A: "I'm not sure. Based on what we know today, we're doing all that we can ..."
- A: "Honestly, I don't know. We have conducted extensive ..."
- A: "To be brutally honest, I'm not sure. What I do know is that we will do everything it takes to ..."

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The Set Up

- Q: “If it is determined that ... will you X ...?”
- A: “I can’t speculate. Now, what I can tell you is ...”, “Our policy requires ...”, “Our practice is ...”

- Q: “What if your [organization] is found negligent/research is found invalid?”
- A: “A thorough review is underway. I can’t speculate on any causes right now.”
- A: “This incident is under investigation and I am unable to discuss details at this time ...”

False Choice

- Q: “Isn’t it better to be safe than sorry?”
- A: “We take XX very seriously. For example, ...”

Hypothetical/Rumor/Speculation

- Q: “What if ...”
- A: “I can’t speculate, but I can tell you that ...”
- A: “That’s a hypothetical question, but what we do know is ...”
- A: “Unfortunately, we don’t have a crystal ball. What I can say is ...”

- Q: “Isn’t it possible that this could have been caused by ...”
- A: “Here’s what we know right now ...”

- Q: “We’ve heard that there’s a possibility that this was caused by ...”
- A: “What we know at the moment is ...”

Multiple Choice (Pick Your Position)

- Q: “So, what is your track record and have you in fact dealt with this problem before and do you accept responsibility for this?”
- A: “Well, to answer your first (or second or third) question ...” (Only respond to the questions that apply to your messages and pick the one you want to answer).

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Negative Comparisons

- Q: “So you would say [your organization] has a far better reputation than ...”
- A: “What I AM saying is ...”
- A: “What we are proud about is ...”
- A: “Our organization has accomplished ...”

False Premise/Negative Allegation

- Q: “There’s clearly been a cover-up. Isn’t it time you came clean with X?”
- A: “We’ve been very open about our operations. In fact, we have ...”

- Q: “Didn’t you/your [organization] lie about...?”
- A: “We’ve been truthful about ... For example, ...”

- Q: “What if it is determined that...”, “You intentionally ...”
- A: “What we are doing is ...”

Speculate Based on Past Events

- Q: “Didn’t this happen before and was it due to operator error?”
- A: “At this point, we don’t know what caused X. That’s why we are investigating ...”
- A: “We learned a lot from the past incident and made improvements.”

How to Defer to the Correct Person

- A: “I know you want updated information. The person who can give that to you is ...”
- A: “I don’t have the information you want. X can give that to you. Here is the phone number.”
- A: “I can only speak to the steps we’ve taken. Additional details can come from X ...”