



# NWF Overview: Working with the Media

How to get your messages across so they end up in print and on air

---

## Newsworthiness

The most important concept in determining newsworthiness is the “news hook.” This is the reason for the reporter to write the story right now. Think of a news hook as something news hangs on — like a coat on a hook. It often plays on something else going on in the reader’s world (with the government, on TV, in the environment, where they live, with their health, etc.)

## The 3 Elements of Newsworthiness — What’s Your hook?

1. **Timeliness:** news, by definition is something that is “new”
  2. **Proximity:** the closer the story is to the reader, the more of an effect it will carry
  3. **Relevance:** the more your news applies to the reader, the more interest they’ll show in it
- 

## Media Toolkits

A media toolkit is a collection of items, usually put together in a folder or packet that contains basic information about the organization’s stance on an issue or series of issues. It is designed to give members of the media easy access to the information and tools they need to accurately report on the issue and focus on the story you’re looking for them to report on.

## What should I include in my Media Toolkit?

- A fact sheet about or a general overview of the issue
  - News releases related to the issue
  - Published positive editorials about the issue
  - Any visual materials such as graphs, photos, or Powerpoints that may be of interest
  - Any other materials that state your organization’s mission and stance on the issue
  - Your business card or contact info
- 

## Embargoes

An **embargo** is a “hold” (until a certain, specified date) put on a news release, report or other information that you give to one or more reporters. An embargo gives the reporter a chance to study and research the material so that when the embargo lifts, the story released is the best story possible. It is the best tool you have to control the timing of your release of information, while giving reporters the necessary information to write a strong, in-depth story.

**A note of caution:** some reporters do not respect embargoes, reasoning that the material has been so widely distributed that it’s already in the public domain.

---

## Exclusives

An **exclusive** is information that is given to one reporter only. When giving a reporter exclusive rights to a story, a publication time should be agreed upon so you know when the story will post and you can send out the news release on your end. If the reporter has not published the story by that time or decides to pass on the story altogether, you are then free to give exclusive rights to their competition at other news outlets. Remember, you cannot give an exclusive to one reporter and an embargo to others.

## TV Tips

With TV, the story is told with pictures. You can either provide the reporter with footage you already have (called “B roll”), or assist them in getting original footage. Invite TV reporters to your media events using a **media advisory**. Make sure to make your events visually appealing by choosing a relevant setting or backdrop, as well as charts or graphs from a report you are releasing. (i.e., when releasing a report on power plant pollution with a power plant as the backdrop or enlarged photos of one).

## Radio Tips

Find out which stations in your area air local talk-radio programs and add their producers to your list of contacts and keep them up-to-date on your issues.

---

## Working with Editorial Writers

Editorial writers have a strong effect on the opinions of their readers. Therefore, by convincing them to take an editorial position on your issue, you could potentially influence thousands of others. It is to your benefit to find the editors in your area who are most likely to cover your issues and meet with them whenever you have a specific issue that is appropriate for editorial coverage. The same rules for working with reporters apply to editorial writers; however, you’ll want to make sure you:

- Come prepared with attractive written materials (brochures, fact sheets, etc.) on your organization and the issues you specifically want to get across in your meeting.
- Be prepared to prove why your issues are important to their audience. Use facts and figures and be sure to mention academics and researchers who support your position.

## Working with Editorial Boards

Larger newspapers often have editorial boards that share editorial responsibilities. Like individual editorial writers, these boards are prominent opinion-makers. However, editorial board meetings are more formal than editorial writer meetings. Also, the editorial board only gets together at regularly scheduled intervals so your meeting will be less spontaneous and the topics you discuss will be more general than with an individual editorial writer. With the exception of the two differences above, meetings with editorial boards follow the same protocol as meetings with editorial writers.