

HOW TO ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW

Overview

The tone you set when first reaching out to a contact to request an interview has a great influence on whether the interview is accepted or not, therefore it is important to make sure that your email is polished and professional. Remember, the people you interview and establish as contacts during your time with TuneFM can form part of your professional network as you move through your studies and career, so be sure that the impression you are making is positive!

Read on to learn the do's and don'ts of interview requests.

The Do's

- Research the person you are reaching out to and have a well-developed understanding of why they specifically make a great interview choice. Do this before reaching out.
- Identify your role and where you work e.g. Broadcast Assistant at TuneFM. Use semi-formal language (respond in like).
- Explain the purpose of the interview and its context.
- Explain the form of the interview, where the content will be used and outline how much time the process will take e.g. a 15-minute interview.
- Be to the point in your subject line e.g. Interview Request.
- Provide your contact details and working hours.
- Show knowledge of their work by citing something specific.
- Present this as an opportunity for them, not as a favour to you.
- Proofread!

The Don'ts's

- Don't be inflexible or demanding.
- Don't be casual. This can be perceived as unprofessional or rude.
- Don't be generic - customise your email to each individual.
- Don't be inaccurate. Sending an email to someone that refers to them as the incorrect title, misspells their name, or incorrectly identifies their role on a project will make you look ill-prepared.
- Don't be vague about what you are requesting, give specifics. Don't waffle on- only touch on the key info and be concise.

Templates

Example of a podcast interview request:

Subject: Interview Request for Plastics Podcast

Hello [NAME],

I am a [TITLE] at Tune FM and I am currently producing a podcast called Plastic: The Last Straw in partnership with the NSW Environment Protection Authority. You can see more info and find our first episode here: [LINK THAT GIVES CONTEXT]

I recently read your paper reviewing the effects of plastic-associated chemicals on human health and found it very interesting. I'm hoping that you might be willing to take part in a brief interview for Episode 3 of the Plastic: The Last Straw podcast (which has a special focus on plastic and human health) to discuss your research in this area.

Our aim is to make the academic discussion surrounding plastic accessible to a wide audience, to support the EPA's plastic bans and to encourage public support of research and innovators in the future.

If this is something you would be interested in taking part in, the interview would take place as a short, casual Zoom interview at a time convenient to you.

I look forward to hearing back from you!

*Kind Regards,
[YOUR NAME]*

Example of a radio interview request:

Subject: Interview Request for TuneFM

Dear Mohammed,

I am reaching out to you on behalf of TuneFM where I am a volunteer. We are running a story on the impacts of pesticides on pollinators in the environment, and what can be done to minimise the risks. I found your work through a series of lectures that you did for UNE and noticed that your research area of focus was on this subject.

I was wondering if you would be interested in being involved with this story - we are looking for a short 15-minute audio interview, snippets of which will be used on the radio station. The full interview will be uploaded to TuneFM's website as a podcast episode. I think it would be fantastic to have you on, as you are an expert in the subject and have a lot of knowledge to share.

If you are interested, you can reach me on this email address or by calling me on 04 1234 5678. I am available every weekday before 2 PM.

Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Wayne

TuneFM Volunteer Announcer

After the email

When researching potential interviewees, it's good practice to compile a list of 3 or more people you could reach out to for any given story. If the person that you consider to have the most interesting perspective or most valuable contribution to make is unavailable, respond by thanking them for their time and asking them if there is someone else they recommend reaching out to.

Often, academics have research teams and access to a network of other experts in their field. If they don't know anyone else, refer back to your list and begin reaching out to others. For breaking news especially, it's crucial to have an idea of a cut-off time for responses, if someone isn't replying in a timely manner you need to be prepared to pivot in another direction, so you don't fall behind the news cycle and miss your story.

If an interviewee is nervous about the format the interview will take and cites this as a reason for not participating, highlight to them that you can send the questions to them ahead of time so they can prepare and (where possible) offer to do the interview off-air so there is less pressure and more room for mistakes and multiple takes.

Ensure you are responsive to all communications you receive, even if someone is turning down a request or cancelling a scheduled interview. Responsiveness is part of professionalism and goes a long way in maintaining positive and effective working relationships with your contacts.

Interview Prep.

- Conduct in-depth research on the person/people you will be interviewing and create thoughtful, well-prepared questions designed to develop a key point or argument.
- Construct questions to be open and have direction, avoiding closed questions that result in yes or no responses.
- Offer to send them the questions ahead of time so they can prepare and also let them know that, as the expert, if they feel an interesting point has been missed, they can suggest or add questions.
- Make sure they are familiar with the format the interview will take ahead of time. Let them know that we will share snippets on social media and ask if they are comfortable being recorded on video.
- Organise the interview to be either online or in the studio and send a calendar invitation. If online, make sure to double-check what time zone your interviewee lives in as part of the scheduling process. Online interviews require a private, quiet space with a reliable internet connection, so make sure you know where you're setting up on the day of the interview. If the interview is in person, get in touch with the Operations Coordinator to book time in the studio.

Post- interview

- After you have conducted an interview, make sure to send an email to your interviewee, thanking them for their time and contribution. Include the time their interview will air and where they can access it. If it is being podcasted or written into an article, send them direct links.
- If you didn't gather all of the information you needed during the interview, send questions about what they would like linked in your show notes (if applicable), if they would like to be tagged on social media etc.
- You should also ask them if they are happy to be contacted for interviews/media opportunities with TuneFM in the future. If so, enter their information into our contact list.

Get in touch!

If at any point throughout the interview process you need help or advice you can always reach out to the Operations Coordinator for direction. Your fellow volunteers are also a great resource that you can draw from at any time. Don't be afraid to ask for pointers or tips from other volunteers who may already have a few interviews under their belt.