

THE DON'T'S

1. Do not leave long voice mails.
Most journalists are too pressed for time to wade through lengthy messages. Make your point in 30 seconds – or fewer. State your name, announce that this is will be a brief message, and explain your intent. Leave your phone number (and email address if time permits.)
2. Do not be vague. Be specific about why you are getting in touch.
3. Do not be dishonest or misleading.
If a journalist asks questions about a topic which you know nothing about, or a topic on which you would prefer not to comment, say so. Your candidness will be appreciated.
4. Do not be afraid to say “I don’t know.”
If a journalist asks a question and you don’t know the answer, say so. Do not try to wing it. You may wind up embarrassing yourself and embarrassing the journalist.
5. Do not expect – or demand – that someone act on your pitch immediately
Being overly pushy will get you no where.
6. Do not complain if your story is planned, and then gets moved or even cancelled. Neither you nor the journalist has control over breaking news, or an editor’s decision. Be understanding.

DO'S

1. Do be polite. Remember that the person you are pitching may be on a deadline and may not have time to entertain your pitch immediately.
2. Do be persistent.
Follow up regularly and keep a dialogue open.
3. Do your research...and do it before (and not after) you pitch. There is nothing more embarrassing than pitching a media outlet that no longer exists. There is nothing more rewarding than making a great contact with a journalist or broadcaster whose work you greatly admire.
4. Do be accommodating.
Does a journalist need an interview within the hour?
Do everything in your power to accommodate the request.
Does he or she need to have the book by tomorrow?
Overnight it if finances permit.
Does he or she need a digital file of cover art, or an author photo? Send it.
Be helpful. Make the journalist's job easier.
5. Do follow their rules.
Does a journalist not want phone calls? Do not call.
Does a journalist prefer to be contacted only at certain times? Play along.
For years, I worked with a producer of a national show who only wanted pitches by fax, on Mondays (except holidays) from 9:30 – 11:30 AM Eastern.
Following his rules resulted in some great bookings.

6. Do say thanks.

Thank them for their time, thank them for their consideration, and even thank them when they pass on a project. It will keep the door open for future pitches. If a journalist or broadcaster interviews you, or mentions your book, write them a note of thanks, but resist the urge to send a gift. This is in violation of the journalists' professional code of ethics. By avoiding the temptation to send a present or gift, you will avoid a potentially uncomfortable situation for you and for the journalist. A simple, sincere "thank you" goes a long way.