

Introducing Yourself as a Journalist

Getting the Story · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

You ask about how to introduce yourself to prospective interviewees. Why not say: "Hello, my name is * and I'm a freelance journalist. I'm writing an article for XXX publication on the topic of YYY, and as you're a very respected expert in that topic - even Wikipedia says you're Australia's best - I was wondering if you'd be kind enough to give me a few minutes of your time to ask you some questions so I might quote you in my article". This is all true. If he/she questions whether you've been commissioned or you're doing it on spec, you'll have to answer truthfully. But if you sound confident, friendly and knowledgeable about the topic - and if you ask questions that are intelligent and well-informed - you'll get your interview.

If you sound amateurish, shy, halting, time-wasting or uninformed
you'll get the old brush-off.

Whatever you do, don't lie and don't exaggerate. Don't beg ("Take pity on me, I'm just a poor beginner"). But do smile while you talk, do be charming, do LISTEN, and do be quick.

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit simontownsendjournalist.com for the full archive.