

# CONTACTING SOURCES AND ARRANGING INTERVIEWS

Kelsey Whipple

University of Massachusetts Amherst

# Contacting Sources

- Remember that you're asking for their time.
- Make clear why this source should give you their time and why you and your audience would benefit from their time.
- Be polite and professional.
- Introduce yourself, your outlet, the topic of your story, and the angle of your interview.
- Provide a time estimate.



# Be Persistent

- Some sources may be nervous, reluctant or busy.
- To be a strong journalist is to be a persistent one.
- Try to reach your source through different mediums using a variety of contacts.
- Explain why this source is valuable to this story.
- Try, try again.



# Be Respectful

- The way you arrange and conduct an interview has an impact on the results of that interview.
- Research your source in advance.
- Treat your source in a way that fosters a long-term professional relationship.



# Key Takeaways:

- Pick strong sources who are knowledgeable about the topic for which you need information and relevant to the scope and focus of your story. Don't interview people with whom you have a potential conflict of interest---whether real or perceived.
- When requesting an interview, briefly introduce yourself, your outlet, your story, and the medium and time estimate of your interview. Be clear, direct, succinct, and professional.
- Sometimes, sources are busy, tough to contact, or averse to doing interviews. Be persistent, and follow up creatively and politely to explain why a source is key to your reporting.
- Do your homework. Before you ever reach out to a potential source, get to know everything you can about that person and what makes them relevant to your story.