These ‘tips’ were drafted at a joint workshop, “Turning Sex Research into News,” June, 2005, The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction.

http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/services/KII/index.html

1. Identify your specialty – do not speculate or feel obliged to speak outside your area of expertise.
2. Be prepared for interviews – if you get a phone call, schedule your interview for another time. Most phone interviews last 20 to 40 minutes.
3. Know the perspective of the journalist, and of the institution or outlet behind the reporter.
4. Prepare yourself ahead of time by jotting down a few of the most important points you want to convey about your work. Think about relevant headlines.
5. Ask questions to assess the reporter’s knowledge and where the article might be headed.
6. Review the rules of engagement with the reporter. Remember you are always “on the record” unless you ask to go “off the record” and the reporter grants your request.
7. Recognize that most journalists are generalists, writing for a lay audience. Be able to explain your research for public understanding, and provide context for the readers. Explicitly state what your study is about.
8. Though it is your research, the reporter’s outlet owns the story. Although you may influence the approach the journalist chooses to take, you cannot dictate it.
9. Ask about deadlines and respond in a timely manner, or decline if you are too busy.
10. Describe the limitations of your research, and ask the reporter to include these in the story.
11. Be explicit about your concerns, and ask for a fact check. Be easy to find, and give good contact information including a phone number for quick follow-up.
12. Suggest other reliable sources who might comment on your study.
13. Have realistic expectations and know what the news will not be about.
14. Be wary of red flags about the reporter, e.g., if the journalist is uninformed, unable to re-iterate your statements, or asks uninformed or vague questions.
15. Be wary of red flags about the story; if the questions are too obscure or off the topic of your research, say so. If the reporter is clearly biased, asking loaded questions, or trying to provoke sensational responses, point it out. If it continues, end the interview.
16. If there is an error in fact or context, request a correction. If you disagree with the perspective of the story, you can talk to an ombudsman, send a letter to the editor, or propose your own op-ed piece in response.
17. Get media training – learn to convey complex messages simply without losing accuracy, to handle difficult questions, and understand how the media works.
