

# Strategies used by journalists

## during interviews or press conferences



### How to use this document

This document presents some examples of the different strategies and kinds of questions that journalists use and suggestions to how you may respond to these.

Being prepared for journalistic tactics makes it easier to respond and to return to your own key messages, and you will not as easily feel that you were tricked into saying something you did not intend to say.

Use the document for spokesperson training and to rehearse your key messages.



### How was this document developed?

This document is part of a WHO series of supporting documents concerning events that could erode confidence in vaccination. Such events can be related to vaccine safety, adverse events following immunization, changes in the vaccination programme, negative public debate, outbreaks or pandemics.

All documents were developed based on scientific evidence, laboratory research and fieldwork within psychology, social and behavioural science and communication and lessons learnt in countries. For an introduction to the theoretical background and evidence, refer to the WHO publication *Vaccination and trust*, available here: [www.euro.who.int/vaccinetrust](http://www.euro.who.int/vaccinetrust).

The supporting documents are intended for use by national

- ministries of health
- centers for disease control
- immunization programmes
- regulatory authority institutions.



**World Health  
Organization**

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## Strategies used by journalists during interviews and press conferences

Journalists use various tactics and strategies that may trick you into saying something you did not intend to say. If you are aware of these tactics, it is easier to respond and to return to your own key messages.

Below are some examples of the different strategies used by journalists and how you can respond. Use them for spokesperson training and to rehearse your key messages.

To **READ MORE** refer to:

- *Tips for spokespersons*
  - *How to prepare a message map*
- [euro.who.int/vaccinetrust](http://euro.who.int/vaccinetrust)

### Strategies used by journalists and possible response mechanisms

#### Strategy Speculation

##### Example of question posed by journalist

- What could happen if...?
- How do you think this could happen...?
- Can you offer a guess as to how it happened...?

##### Guidance

- Do not go along with speculation.
- If possible and relevant, bridge back to your key message.

##### Examples of how you may respond

- I would not want to speculate on that. The facts are....
- It is important that we deal with the facts as we know them, and they are....
- It is too early to tell. We will have a full evaluation and find out what happened.

#### Strategy Hearsay

##### Example of question posed by journalist

- Dr Smith from the Health Education Bureau told us that....
- A source from within the Ministry of Health told us....
- How do you respond to the WHO country office, which said...
- Our sources tell us...

##### Guidance

- Do not demean the source of their information.
- Bridge back to your key message.

##### Examples of how you may respond

- I cannot speak for Dr Smith, but what I can address is....
- This is the information I have....
- I would like to stick to the facts....
- The facts are....
- This is what I know....

#### Strategy Negative slant

##### Example of question posed by journalist

- Can you tell us about the child that died from measles vaccine..?
- Am I right in assuming that this could have been easily avoided?
- Why is your surveillance substandard?

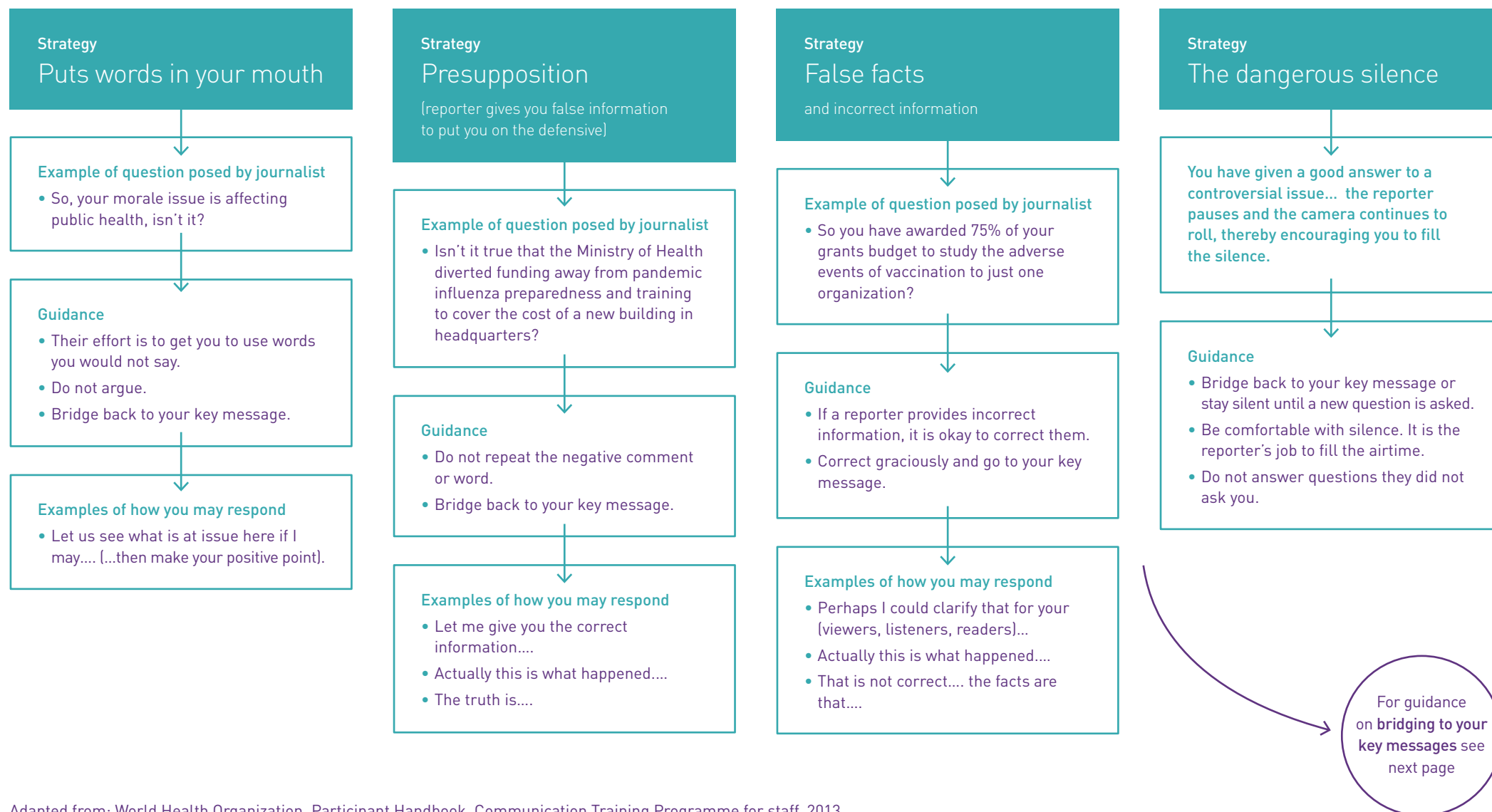
##### Guidance

- Do not repeat the negative comment or word.
- Correct any inaccuracy and bridge back to your key messages.

##### Examples of how you may respond

- The truth is....
- I will give you the facts as I have them....
- Once again, let me share with you exactly what happened....

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## Bridging to your key messages

Example of bridging:

Acknowledge the question and answer appropriately

**Interview question:**

"Talking about pregnant women: Isn't it true that the new pandemic influenza vaccine will have more side effects than a regular seasonal influenza vaccine because of the rapid development?"

**Interview answer:**

"Whilst it is true that there are some minor side effects, the outcomes of the studies completed to date suggest that the pandemic influenza vaccine is just as safe and has similar side effects as the seasonal influenza vaccine..."

Bridge to your key messages

...The fact of the matter is that the benefits of this vaccine far outweigh the risks. Pregnant women have an elevated risk for severe illness and have a 10 times higher risk of hospitalization in intensive care units when infected by this new influenza."