



## SOUND BITES FOR ADVOCACY



According to Wikipedia, a **sound bite** is a short clip of speech or music extracted from a longer piece of audio, often used to promote or exemplify the full length piece. In the context of journalism, a sound bite is characterized by a short phrase or sentence that captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say, and is used to summarize information and entice the reader or viewer to learn more.

Here are some keys to successfully developing and using *sound bites* for advocacy. Follow these simple rules and guidelines and you might just get the best sound-bite in your next media interview.

- **Don't** miss out by not having a well-honed message
- **Do** make your sound bite sound effortless, conversational, and natural.
- **Do** make it memorable and sincere. *Open a window to your personality.*
- **Do** write and rewrite your sound bites, sharpening their focus and eliminating unnecessary words and awkward constructions.
- **Do** avoid sound bites that will leave the listener mentally asking “*So what?*”
- **Do** consider including a compelling “hook,” an intriguing aspect that will engage the listener, prompt him or her to ask questions, and keep the conversation going.
- **Don't** let your sound bites sound canned or stilted.
- **Do** practice your sound bites. You should memorize them, but you should know them well enough so you express your key points without *sounding* as though they were memorized.
- **Do** practice in front of mirrors and role-playing with friends. Practicing in the car on the way to events is a great way to practice.
- **Don't** ramble. Familiarizing yourself as much as possible with your sound bites will help keep you from getting off track.

- **Do** be warm, friendly, confident, and enthusiastic. A smile is often the best way to show friendliness and enthusiasm; while a strong, firm voice is the best way to express confidence.
- **Do** take it slowly.
- **Don't** rush through your sound bites, and do pause briefly between sentences. *Breathe.*
- **Do** project your passion for what you do.
- **Do** ask (if on camera) if you should look at the interviewer or the camera.
- **Do** maintain eye contact with your listener or the camera.
- **Don't** get bogged down with industry jargon or acronyms that your listener may not comprehend.
- **Do** be prepared to wrap up earlier than you were planning if you see the listener's eyes glazing over or interest waning.
- **Don't** hesitate to develop different versions of your sound bites for different situations and audiences.
- **Do** leave a sound bite as a voice message if you're calling a media contact and get his or her voicemail. You may be even more successful getting action from that than if you had talked to them personally.
- **Do** incorporate examples and stories to help support your points. Provide examples of successful outcomes. Stories make your speech memorable.
- **Don't** focus just on yourself, an approach that will almost assure a "so what?" reaction.
- **Do** focus on how CAPA advocacy positions can benefit public health and safety.
- **Do** use concrete, listener-friendly language, but at the same time, **don't** be afraid to paint vivid word pictures.
- **Do** end with an action request, such as: *go the CAPA website (alcoholpolicyalliance.org) to learn more, and/or TAKE ACTION on your cell phone by Texting Justice to 313131.*
- **Don't** forget to update your sound bites as your situation changes.