

How to reach out to your local media

Once you've started doing your fabulous work on biodiversity you'll want to tell the world about it. Your local media are a great way of getting started.

1. First, figure out *why* you want to work with the media. Do you want them to run stories about biodiversity? Or do you want a journalist to visit your school and give a workshop on covering events? Do you want a reporter to cover your special event on 22 May? Or is it for something else entirely? Your goal will determine who you contact and what you ask.

2. Next, you'll have to decide *which media outlet* is the best place to tell your story. Some forms of media are better at conveying some types of stories than others. It may be easier to gain the support of a media outlet that has youth reporters, covers youth events or already works with your school. Don't limit yourself to just one media outlet; try contacting several types. Your local media might include:
 - Newspapers – school newspapers, dailies or weeklies; papers with a specific target audience
 - Magazines – weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, features or news etc.
 - Radio – school, local or national news programs and talk shows
 - Television – morning, noon and evening news magazine or other feature shows; local or cable talk shows
 - Wire services – state and national services (for example: AP, Reuters, UPI etc.)
 - Newsletters
 - On-line publications, e-zines and websites



3. After you've decided which media outlet to target, *pitch your idea* for a story or an event to a reporter. Don't be shy about inviting them to attend your *Green Wave* event. They'll probably be as excited as you once you tell them some of the special activities you have planned and the importance of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

- Get their attention! Start with the main point then explain the details. Your pitch should include a brief outline of your topic, your angle and some people you'll interview. Be sure to make your pitch short, sharp, focused and concise.
- Practice your pitch with a friend or teacher. Make sure it's interesting.
- Listen first. Ask the reporter if it's a good time to talk. If it's not, ask when you should call back.
- Be specific and be prepared. Have supporting facts, names and details ready during the pitch. The reporter may want to follow up on your story.
- Know the issue. (This step is where your biodiversity learning comes in handy!)
- Connect your story with a relevant current event. The International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020 are great examples.
- Don't make up facts. If you don't know the answer to a question, ask if you can get back to the reporter once you've found the answer.
- Offer extra material to complete a story (e.g. interviews with you, your youth group and/or your teachers, photographs, additional background information).
- Keep records of whom you contact and which stories you pitch.
- If your pitch isn't working, try re-pitching your story with a new angle.
- Even if the reporter doesn't follow up on your pitch, be sure to thank him or her for their time. You want to keep good relations with the media.

4. You might also want to *send out a press release* to inform the media about your event. The goal of a press release is to give enough information so that a reporter can write a story based on your press release. Your press release should be to the point (start with the conclusion), contain a short and snappy headline, and grab their attention. It should include all the necessary facts and your and your school's contact information. Be sure to send it to the appropriate person or department.

5. If your story is covered by the media, be sure to *share your appreciation* with them. Also, please *send a copy to greenwave@cbd.int* so we can post it on our website.

Sources:

Media Awareness: www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/toolkit_resources/tipsheets/pitching_story.cfm

Tips from Green Media Toolshed.

