

Accessing Mainstream Media

The mainstream media consist of outlets that cover a larger territory than your own neighbourhood. For instance, your city's daily newspaper would be a mainstream media outlet. So would your local television and radio stations. Mainstream media outlets can also be national and even international.

Accessing mainstream media outlets is a process that takes plenty of persistence. The larger a media outlet is, the more difficult it is to get its attention. But with some planning and determination, you can get it to notice you.

1. **Get to know your local media.** Read your local newspapers and watch/listen to local news broadcasts. Get to know which stations and newspapers report on the issues you want to draw attention to - these outlets may be more willing to listen to you. Some media outlets even have Softball links on their editorial boards.
2. **Get to know the journalists who report on the issues you're interested in.** Most reporters are assigned to beats, so know which ones to contact for Softball issues. Don't be intimidated when calling reporters - remember, they're always on the lookout for story ideas.
3. **Identify yourself and your club/Association.** When you call a reporter, give the information he/she needs to know about you as a source: your name, your club/Association, your school, your position on issues. Give some background on yourself and your group, as well as information about your current activities.
4. **Be patient.** Building a media presence takes time. The initial contact, perhaps a 10-minute phone call - might not result in a story about your project the next day. But once reporters and editors know you and your organisation, they'll be more likely to approach you in the future.

Accessing Community Media

Daily newspapers and TV/radio news shows aren't the only outlets in your area. You should also check for community media. Many neighbourhoods produce their own weekly or bi-weekly newspapers, and schools and community groups may also put out a regular newsletter. There might be at least one community newspaper, radio or television station. As with mainstream media, research them all and decide which ones to approach.

Small community media are generally more accessible than mainstream media, since most have a mandate to address issues of local concern. So your story ideas are more likely to be covered. And because most community newspapers have very small staffs, (there may be only one staff editor, and a number of freelance or volunteer reporters) you can often call up the newsroom and speak directly to the editor. If you're a strong writer, you can even offer to write the article!

Getting Involved with Community Radio and TV Stations

Your city or town may have a public-access TV channel, which exists to provide a place for community groups and citizens to make themselves heard.

Community TV is constantly on the lookout for stories that don't get told on the mainstream TV stations, so getting their attention is generally easy. Call your local community station, and introduce yourself and your organisation to the programming director. He/she will probably give your information to a producer, who may decide to do a news story - based on the your information, and a couple of follow-up interviews. They might invite you into the studio for a more in-depth interview.

Radio stations in the community work much the same way. Universities and even high schools often have radio stations, usually staffed by students, but the programming often reflects the interests of the community at large. They might be particularly interested in Softball stories.

Accessing the Internet

The ability to post articles, images and sound on the World Wide Web - at little cost - has made the Internet a powerful tool for Softballer's to network and to share ideas, information and experiences e.g. Facebook, blogs, Softball forums etc.