

Interviewing Tips

TOP 10 TIPS

These tips come from experienced radio reporters and video producers. Use them along with the “Interview Worksheet” to plan and conduct your interviews.

- 1. Know the purpose of your interview.**
 - What are you hoping to gain from talking to people? What do you want to find out? How do you see the information fitting into your piece?
- 2. Be prepared.**
 - Research your interview subject and topic. Have questions prepared (see “Sample Questions” sheet) and background information about the person you’re interviewing. Design your questions to get the ideal quotes you’d like your interviewee to say.
- 3. Introduce yourself.**
 - Put your interview subject at ease and establish again who you are.
- 4. Ask for his or her name.**
 - Get the correct spelling and pronunciation if you plan to use the name in your story.
- 5. Listen.**
 - Interviews can go in a different direction than the one you planned. Go with the flow. Listen for cues to interesting questions and ask follow-up questions. If you hear something you want to know more about, ask the interviewee to tell you more.
- 6. Make eye contact.**
 - Don’t stare at your questions. Glance down occasionally to keep things flowing, but also engage your interviewee. This makes him or her feel more comfortable, and usually results in better answers.
- 7. Take notes.**
 - Make a note of items you’d like to use in your piece so you remember where they are later.
- 8. Leave personal biases at the door.**
 - Your job is to be objective and capture the interviewee’s point of view. If you ask inappropriate questions or make the person feel uncomfortable, your subject won’t be as open with you as they could be.
- 9. Record interesting background noise.**
 - Make sure the sounds fit with the story. If you’re interviewing someone about the health effects of working in an office, record some office sounds, such as the person checking e-mail, rifling through papers or answering the phone.
- 10. Say thank you.**
 - Send your interviewee a note thanking him or her for the interview. Be courteous. Think of everyone you talk to as a contact you may need in the future.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Ask open ended questions

- Don't ask questions that can be answered yes or no. Your questions should be focused enough that you get a direct answer, for example, "Why do you think students skip school?" instead of "Do you skip school?"
 - Tell me about that.
 - I don't get it, what do you mean?
 - Why does that matter?
 - Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Get simple answers

- Ask your interviewee to respond in easy-to-understand language.
 - If you had to explain this to a fifth grader...
 - Why should I care?
 - Can you give an example of that?

Draw out emotion and feeling

- Ask your interviewee questions that require more than matter-of-fact answers.
 - Describe the moment when...
 - What was your first reaction to...
 - Looking back, how do you feel about...
 - Now, walk me through it. Start from the moment...

REFERENCES

Interviewing Tips and Interview Worksheet were modified from materials created by WHY? for Public Media Commons courses: <http://www.why.org/hamiltoncommons/>

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This resource is a component of the Media-Making Toolkit for Science Education, developed by KQED Education. The Toolkit includes instructions, worksheets and rubrics to assist educators in implementing media-making projects with students.

For a complete listing of the resources in KQED's Media-Making Toolkit, please visit www.kqed.org/education.

Name:

Date:

Interview Worksheet

Location of the interview	
Describe the area	
What kind of natural or place-specific sounds can you record, such as a busy street, café, birds chirping, or rain?	
Person to be interviewed	
Interviewee's address	
Phone	
Email	
Job Title	
Is your interviewee under 18?	Yes / No <i>If yes, you will need to get permission from his/her parents.</i>
What is this person's experience with the topic?	
List the questions you will ask. (Use a separate page, if necessary.)	

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