

Interviewing

Sports Journalism
Tufts University
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Interviewing

- Interviewer = Journalist
- Subject = Person being interviewed

Interviewing

- The purpose of interviewing is get
 - Information
 - Quotes
 - Details

Preparation

- Do as much legwork/research/reporting as possible before going into an interview.
- This will help you shape your questions.
- It will also help you focus in on the key points of your interview.

Preparation

- Direct proportion between what a journalist knows before going into an interview and what he/she gets out of it.
- This will help you shape your questions.
- It will also help you focus in on the key points of your interview.

Preparation

- You should have an idea of what to expect in an interview.
 - This doesn't mean you shouldn't be prepared to change things up on the fly.
- Don't go into an interview with assumptions.

Preparation

- Think up your questions beforehand.
 - Write them out.
- Don't get so caught up in your questions/the order of your questions, that you fail to allow the interview to shift direction
 - As long as the direction is still newsworthy/relevant

Interview Methods

- Interviews can be conducted
 - In person
 - By phone
 - Via email

In Person (Pros)

- Ideal interview method.
- You can get the best feel for the subject.
- You can get details.
- Develop a greater rapport with the subject.

In Person (Cons)

- Can be expensive. (Travel)
- Can be time consuming.
- Scheduling
- In some cases, observation isn't necessary.

Phone (Pros)

- You can still hear the person's voice.
- Easier to schedule
- Efficient
- Inexpensive

Phone (Cons)

- You can't observe the person/scene.
- Calls can get dropped.
- Less personal

Email (Pros)

- Good for quick follow ups.
- Good for if you're looking primarily for factual information.
- The quotes are there verbatim.

Email (Cons)

- No spontaneity.
- Subject might not even be crafting the statement.
- Least likely to get good quotes.
- Elaboration unlikely.
- No personal interaction.
- How to handle grammar, spelling, etc., errors.

Information

- One way you get information is through interviewing.
 - Interviews should not be a substitute for information you can easily get elsewhere.
- When attempting to get information, start with asking for an overview.
 - First get “What happened?”
 - Then you can get more into the specifics.

Information

- Get information specific to your story.
 - Don't let people ramble needlessly.
 - Getting a ton of information you don't need is just a waste of both your time.

Questions

- Most interviews will contain open and closed questions.
 - Open questions: Require explanation/more than 1-2 word answers.
 - Closed questions: Can be answered with basically yes or no.

Open Questions

- These are the kind of questions that will generate quotes.
- These are also good for getting detail, anecdotes, examples, things that will add “color” to your stories.
- You want to ask more open than closed questions.

Closed Questions

- Good for confirming facts and details.
 - Make sure you get spelling of names and proper titles.
- Can be timesaving.
 - Sometimes, you just want a yes or no answer.

Questions

- Well-formulated questions are more likely to yield good answers and quotes.
- Ask for specifics.
- Direct questions will get direct answers.
 - You want direct answers.

Follow-Up Questions

- Questions asked to solicit elaboration/get more information or to follow up on an answer to a previous question.
 - Follow up questions are often questions generated on the spot.
- Follow up questions can also be asked to
 - Get a better quote
 - Respond to evasions
 - To translate jargon

Follow-Up Questions

- Questions asked to solicit elaboration/get more information or to follow up on an answer to a previous question.
 - Follow up questions are often questions generated on the spot.
 - When someone says something good/interesting, follow up.
- Follow up questions can also be asked to
 - Get a better quote
 - Respond to evasions
 - To translate jargon

Throwaway Questions

- Questions asked to kill time while a journalist either formulates his/her next question or as he/she is still taking down what the subject has just said.
- Something very basic which will not generate anything useful to the story, but will prevent a lull in the interview.

How to Record

- **ALWAYS** take notes.
 - Even if you use an audio recorder, it could fail.
 - Notes provide an important backup.
 - Also notes are easier to go back through.
- Audio recorders
 - Don't get bogged down in transcribing fill audio.
 - You will use very little verbatim.
- Both
 - Jot down the time in the interview a great quote is said. Then you don't have to go back through the whole tape.

Listen

- Always give your subject's words your full attention.
 - Often people get caught up in what they're going to ask next and forget to actually listen to what the subject is saying.
- If you don't listen, you'll miss information and your interview/story will suffer.
- The best interviews tend to be conversational.

Other Tips

- Be engaged.
 - Verbal cues and non-verbal cues
- Body language. You want to be approachable/relaxed.
- Maintain control of the conversation.
 - If it veers to off course, shift it back to the matter at hand.
- Always end by asking “Do you have anything else to add?” or “Is there anything I might have asked?”