

Preparing for an interview - Checklist

- What can I find out that will interest the listener?
- Who is the best person to ask?
- Where should we hold the interview? Usual order of preference:
 - In the studio
 - Over the phone
 - Interviewee's location
- Book the interview time and place
- Learn how to address the person and their exact title or position.
Write it on top of the question list.
- Where can I find out more about the topic and the guest?
- Do the research.
- Write questions and alternative questions.
- Plan a possible opening that places the guest in the story.
Plan a possible closing, perhaps looking to the future.
- Check the equipment.

Researching

Why are you doing an interview?

- Of interest to the people who are listening
- Relevant to the theme/topic of your programme.

Brainstorm

- Think of all the things you want to know about the subject/person.
- Ask others what they want to know.
- Ask about other people's experience in this area.
- Think hard about what the listeners may want to know – even if you already know the answer.

How do you find out about the person/subject?

- Wikipedia, Linked-In, Facebook, colleagues, teachers, relatives, publications that they may have authored or stories written about them.
- You don't have to use all the material in the interview – use it to get a picture of them or their subject.

Put your questions into a logical order with a beginning, middle and end, so that they bring out a story or paint a picture.

Always write out your questions –

- To remember
- To maintain the sequence
- To come back to if side-tracked.

However, it's important to listen carefully and follow valuable information offered by the interviewee.

Ask open-ended questions. Avoid ones that can be answered "yes" or "no". When did you arrive? (Did you arrive on time?)

When you agree – become the Devil's Advocate – a religious term now used in journalism. It means taking the role of proposing opposition or alternatives to an idea to probe the weaknesses in the guest's viewpoint.

You have a right to ask reasonable questions on behalf of your community. Be certain that is why you are asking and that the questions are reasonable.

Conducting an interview

- If the interview is at the scene, select the best location for:
- Ease of natural conversation
- Appropriate background sound at the right volume
- Put the guest (and yourself) at ease by briefly discussing the general topic. Then begin the interview.
- Take a friendly and sincere approach.
- Ask brief questions.
- Listen to each answer. It may suggest the next question
- Show you are listening by frequently making eye contact. Encourage with a smile or nod, rather than making affirmative sounds [yeah, uh-huh, mmmm are annoying interruptions].
- Search for your guest's opinions. Remember the purpose.
- Keep control.
- Occasionally repeat the guest's name and credentials.
- End on a strong comment from the guest
- Thank the guest.
- If recording, replay the last few seconds of the recording before the guest departs.

How *Not* to – The Deadly Sins of an Interview

Tag Questions

Isn't it? Aren't you? Don't you? Wouldn't you? Shouldn't you?

Cliches

- At this point in time.
- I hear you
- I rest my case

Outrageous Claims

- Everyone knows/says/thinks.
- Alternatives: It seems to be common knowledge that...
- It's widely thought that ...
- I have been told by / met (many) people who say ...

But Surely ...

- You've painted yourself into a corner by indicating that you're about to express your own opinion.
- If you are going to express a personal opinion, make that clear. "In my opinion the system is flawed ..."

Attack!

- Don't attack the person, challenge the process.
- Example: Why are the tests conducted this way? (Why do you conduct the tests this way?)
- Use the radio as a tool, not a weapon.

Lose your temper

- By all means be angry about something, but do not lose your temper. Keep asking questions, calmly, and let the listener decide how angry to get.

Laugh out loud

- Giggle, snigger, sort.
- Unless it's very, very funny, let the listeners have the belly laughs.
- Giggling, sniggering and snorting distort the microphone sound and can get out of hand and turn into hysteria.
- Learn the "Silent Smile". Your humour will show in your voice.