

THE INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS

- Try to develop one good lead question to open things up.
- Include background info that must be collected.
- Develop listening curiosity.
- Jot new questions as they occur during interview.

INTERVIEW

Attitude

- Be friendly--"I am glad to be spending this time with you."
- Be authoritative, not hesitant. By agreeing to do interview, person gives you the right to ask questions. However, he/she retains right to decline to answer.
- Be quiet--listen rather than trying to impress the subject with your knowledge.
- Get info in their words. Pause after answers to give subject chance to elaborate. Sometimes the best follow-up question is no question.
- Be responsive, make eye contact, nod, smile--show that you are awake and listening!
- Be polite. If the subject starts to ramble, listen. When they pause, then you can change the subject.

Focus on answers, not questions:

- Let answer lead naturally to next question rather than worrying about what else you want to ask. (Example--conversations). You can refer to your list of questions at a break or pause to get conversation going again.
- At end, take a minute to briefly review your questions to ensure you got needed background info, or remembered to ask crucial questions.
- Take notes on observations as well as information.

NOTES

- Don't focus so hard on taking notes that you miss answers, cues. Notes are to jog your memory later. This is not an essay test!
- Use abbreviations, shorthand, and quick phrases rather than full sentences.
- Quotes--Anything you might want to quote, take more careful notes (You can leave out obvious words like "the"). Put them in "marks" so you remember that it is a quote. If having trouble getting it down accurately, ask him/her to hold up for a minute, and read back the words. No one wants to be misquoted.

WRITING

- Soon after the interview, review notes to ensure you can read them!
- Rewrite, add, and clarify while the interview is fresh in your mind.
- Put notes away. Let sense of the interview stew around in the back of your mind until it gels. Find the focus:
 - Use "tell a friend" method.
 - Explain the story in one sentence.
 - Write a headline.
 - Find your lead. Find the lead by asking yourself, "What was the most interesting?" With a focus and a good lead, the rest will flow naturally.

- Write the first draft without referring to notes! Then, look over notes to see what ideas, info, etc., are missing that you might want to include.
- You do not have to use everything.
- Write "fix later" or mark with an asterisk parts that need work--don't get hung up on making it perfect the first time through, or you will get laryngitis (lose the voice, or flow)!
- If you have info from another source, identify it.
- Read finished draft out loud--you will hear the rough parts that hide when you read it.
- Check accuracy of facts before rewriting.
- Envision your article as a story with a plot: beginning, middle, end. Your subject is a character in that story. Make your reader see, hear, and care about that subject/character.

Linda Lyman, the Penn Franklin, Murrysville, Pennsylvania