

Interviewing Tips

BE A GOOD LISTENER

- ◆ A good interviewer must be a good listener. Be an aggressive listener!
 - ◆ Do not go into an interview with preconceived ideas. Keep an open mind.
 - ◆ Be attentive; don't be distracted by anyone or anything.
 - ◆ Make eye contact and observe facial expressions and body language if interviewing in person.
 - ◆ Listen between the lines and for what the subject is NOT saying.
 - ◆ Listen for comments that are vague or unclear and need follow up.

THE QUESTIONING

- ◆ Make sure you ask questions that get at the Who, What, Where, Why, When, How.
- ◆ Ask open-ended questions:
 - Ask:** What do you think of the proposal for a border wall?
 - Instead of:** Do you like the plan for a border wall?
- ◆ Avoid two-pronged questions:
 - Example:** What do you think of a border wall and how do you think the government should protect the border?
- ◆ Avoid overly broad questions:
 - Ask:** What are the three worst contributors to climate change?
 - Instead of:** What is affecting climate change?

- ◆ Make your questions short, succinct and to the point.



(Caption: Ian Hurley and Martha Daniel broadcasting at USC Annenberg Media in 2016. Photo by: Willa Seidenberg)

- ◆ The all important FOLLOW-UP question:
Many people will initially respond to questions with a broad answer because they might not know how much detail you want or are interested in, or they might not think of the details that make their comments impactful. An interviewer's job is to get the compelling detail out of their subjects to move beyond vague or overly broad answers, which aren't as interesting.

- ◆ Listen for opportunities to follow up:

Clarification: Something you don't understand or they did not explain well.

Specifics: Ask -- Can you tell me more detail about that?

Examples: Ask -- Can you give me an example of that?

CONTROL THE INTERVIEW

- ◆ If your subject dominates the interview and keeps rambling on and on, gently interrupt and ask another question. You don't want to end the interview without the key answers you need.
- ◆ Ask again: If someone gives you an answer that doesn't directly answer your question or answers it poorly, find another spot in the interview to ask it again, perhaps in a different way. Once they have practiced answering the question, their second response may be more compelling.

- ◆ Use silences: Don't be in a hurry to rush in with another question, especially if you sense that the person has more to say. If you don't take the floor, they may keep going and give you more in-depth details.
- ◆ If you are interviewing someone with controversial views, ask them to answer their critics.

GET GOOD INTERVIEW AUDIO QUALITY

Interview location

- ◆ Choose a location for your interview that minimizes background noise.
- ◆ Do not interview near machinery, noisy appliances or electronics, such air conditioning units, refrigerators or computers.
- ◆ Avoid rooms with hard surfaces. Rooms with carpeting, curtains or stuff furniture work best.
- ◆ Stay away from open windows.
- ◆ If you are interviewing outside:
 - ◆ Try not to be in the wide open or you might hear wind noise.
 - ◆ Stay away from any loud noises, like a big crowd, streets with a lot of traffic, music playing, lawn mowers, etc.

Recording techniques

- Hold your mic or the mic of your phone 3-5 inches from the subject's mouth.
- Try not to point it directly in front of their mouth to avoid p-popping and sibilance. Instead, hold at the same level as the mouth, but pointed slightly to the side away from the airflow. [Need a photo]