



# Anatomy of an Interview



Interviewing is all about your relationship to your interviewee. Most good interview tape comes from good conversations. Try to make your interviewee comfortable by introducing yourself, asking them simple questions to begin with, and explaining why you want to interview them and what you'll use the interview for later on.

Follow the interviewee's lead and listen carefully. If you just listen for the story, YOU want to hear, you may miss something important. Listen between the lines and always ask follow-up questions that will help you tell the story later on when you're editing.

## Introduce yourself

- Who are you and where are you from
- Why do you want to interview them
- What will you use the interview for later on?
- Ask their verbal permission to use their interview as part of your edited piece or get a written release form

**Get comfortable!** Make sure you're in a good, quiet place to talk and that you are in a good position relative to your interviewee.

Do a test recording and ask silly/small talk/introductory questions.

Listen to your test recording and then **record your slate** a.k.a. Please state your name, your location, age, and occupation.

Now the juicy part!

The actual interview questions.

You'll come with interview questions already prepared. When preparing questions think of questions that ask **WHO, WHEN, WHERE, and HOW**. Ask open-ended questions that don't insert your opinion or bias in the question. Try to ask short questions that **don't assume anything about the interviewee or the subject** you are trying to learn about. Try not to ask questions that an interviewee could answer just yes or no to, these are called **closed-questions**.

Steer clear of trigger words that usually make-up a yes or no question, such as: will, did could, can, do, should, are, was, is

Ask questions that make the interviewee **describe and explain as much as possible**.

Start with your list of questions but make sure to use **follow-up questions** to get the interviewee to describe the most interesting things he/she says in detail.



### Some follow-up questions are....

Why are you saying that?  
How do you know that?  
What happened next?  
What was your reaction to that?  
What were your options?  
How did you decide to do that?  
Can you describe that?  
What picture stays in your mind from that event?  
What do you remember most about.....?  
Why do you care so much about\_\_\_\_\_?  
What difference does that make?



### Create a Scene or Get People to DO Things

Think the interview is over but want some action in your audio piece? Get your interviewee to show you around, take you to their favorite hang-out, to meet their friends, or to show you a photo album. Your interviewee will probably relax and you can record it all!

*Other tips for interviewing:*

#### **Don't fear silence (or a pause).**

These just indicate your interviewee is intrigued by your questions or is thinking over what they are discussing with you. Don't talk, don't prod! just wait, they will fill the silence.



#### **Shhhh!**

Every interview is different, so sometimes as the interviewer you'll want your voice to be part of the finished piece. Usually though you'll want to stay quiet, nod instead of saying yes, keep eye contact to show your paying attention. Laugh silently! Try not to interrupt your interviewee or come in on the beginning of their sentences.

#### **Take Notes!**

Write down the environment your interviewing in, remember visual details, write about what struck you most during the interview. Write down questions you want to ask later on so you don't have to interrupt your interviewee. You can also use your mini-disc player to record pre or post-interview notes verbally.

#### **Web Resources**

Youth Media Distribution Initiative  
Great case studies  
<http://Ymdi.org/>