

AS LEVEL
FACT FILES
Journalism

For first teaching from September 2013

For first AS award in Summer 2014

For first A Level award in Summer 2015

Interviewing Tips



**journ
alism**

in the Media and Communications Industry (JMC)

Interviewing Tips



Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- use a range of interview techniques and question types, employing appropriate audio recording equipment.



Content

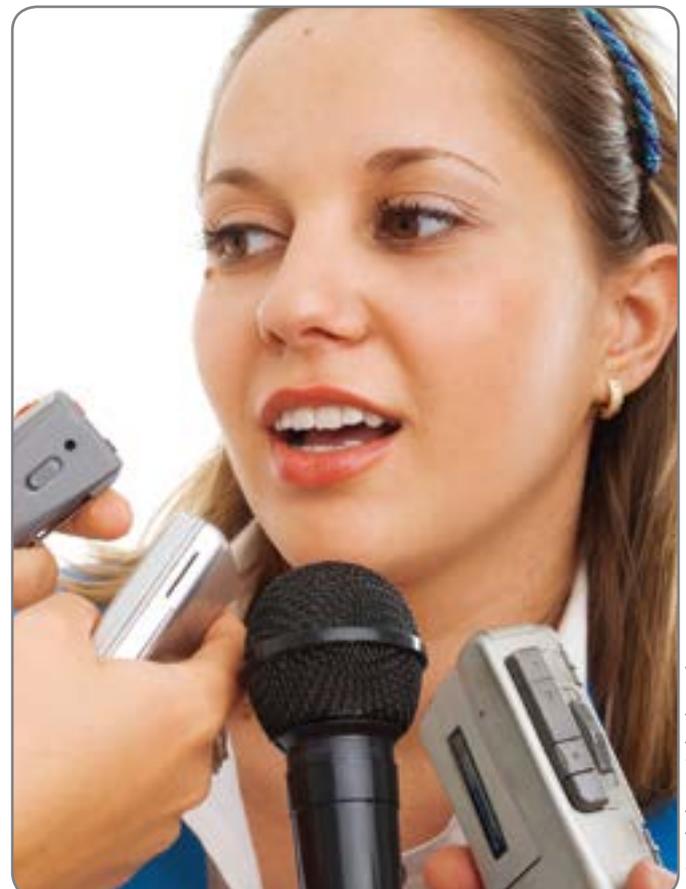
Research and News Gathering Skills and Techniques in Print Journalism. (Page 10, specification)

An interview is a conversation but one with a purpose: to discover facts, opinions or emotions about the topic of your piece.

Interviews can be carried out face-to-face, by phone or even online, although it is easier to judge an interviewee's reactions and build a rapport in person. You should always identify yourself first and say what media outlet you are working for, if applicable.



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record the interview on a recording device – many mobile phones now have that capability. It is common courtesy to tell the person you are recording before starting. The approach also depends on the interviewee, the aim of the interview and what type of piece you are writing.

A basic news interview intended to find out the bare facts from the emergency services after a car accident obviously requires less background research than an in-depth interview with a disgraced business tycoon, for example. A vox pop interview – when a journalist asks people in the street or another public place their opinion on an issue – requires little preparation, but a well crafted, easily understood question is vital.

Your approach depends on the medium. You would obviously use radio recording equipment or a video camera for broadcast. For print, take detailed and accurate notes (using a recognised method such as Teeline shorthand) or

There are some tips that apply to most interview scenarios.

Prepare

Do some preparation, no matter how brief. Always know what you want to get out of an interview. Research the topics you want to cover and the person you are interviewing, if possible. The more background knowledge you have, the better your questions will be and the more information you are likely to get from the interview.



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Write down your questions

Always have a list of questions, starting with the most important. You may not get the chance, or need, to ask them all. However, a plan of some sort will help you stay on track and avoid the interview meandering off into irrelevant areas.



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Put your interviewee at ease

This is especially important with a longer form interview like a profile piece, or when you are talking about a sensitive or emotional subject. Introduce yourself clearly and politely, make some brief small talk (the weather or your journey will do) to warm your subject up before getting down to the interview proper.

Check the details

Remember to get details including the person's name, age, address and so on. Always check the spelling. Take their phone number, if possible, in case you have any follow-up questions. It is best to ask simple factual questions like these at the start of the interview, to help put the interviewee at ease.



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Ask open questions

Don't ask questions which invite a 'yes or no' answer. You will get much richer answers if you ask open questions. For example, rather than asking "Were you happy when you won the Woman of the Year award?" ask "How did you feel when you won the Woman of the Year award?"

Remember, the basic questions in journalism are:

- Who?
- What?
- Why?
- Where?
- When?
- How?

Listen

You have your list of questions, but don't stick to them too rigidly. Listen to what the interviewee says and vary what you ask accordingly. They may use the interview to bring up something unexpected, which warrants further questions. Part of a journalist's job is to interpret what the interviewee says – are they telling you the whole story, for example? What haven't they mentioned, and why? Are there subtle signs that indicate how they really feel?



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Don't fill the silence

Don't rush to fill lulls in the conversation, as you might do in a social situation. Sometimes the interviewee will say something particularly interesting after one of those slightly awkward silences.

Be persistent

Don't be afraid to ask the difficult questions – you are not there to be liked necessarily, but to get the truth. It is usually better to ask a few less contentious questions before you ask the trickier ones, assuming you have the time.

Be polite

Always be polite and professional in your attitude. Make sure to thank the interviewee for their time at the end.



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