

Interview techniques – open and closed questions

Interviewing for radio

Preparing your interviewee

- First of all, ask the person if it is OK to interview them. Don't just assume that they will do it, even if you know them.
- Bear in mind that some people are nervous of having their voice recorded. Some may not want to do an interview for other reasons. Encourage them as far as possible but respect their right to refuse if that's what they decide.
- If you get the go-ahead, tell your interviewee what the topic is, and roughly how long the interview will take (usually no more than 10 minutes). Arrange where and when it will take place if you aren't doing it there and then.
- Check at this stage that your interviewee is happy for the interview to be broadcast!

Practical considerations

- Prepare a list of questions beforehand so that the interview goes smoothly. Writing them down and taking them to the interview with you means that you've got back-up if you forget them!
- Try and find a quiet recording space. Before you start recording, check and reduce interference from noisemakers such as music, fans, air-conditioning. Turn off mobile phones, too. (Any background noise will be recorded along with your interview, and it can't be edited out!)
- Positioning: get as close as possible to the interviewee to improve audio quality. If at a desk, ask to sit at the corner. Support your mic arm.
- Use earphones to monitor (listen back to) the sound while you are recording. This will guarantee recording quality.

Types of question

Remember the 5 Ws – **What, Why, When, Where, Who** – and How...

Open – a question that can be answered in any way. It encourages people to give you detailed replies.

Eg. What's happening in your area? How did you get involved?

Closed – a question that can be answered with a yes or no, or other very brief answer.

Eg. Did you eat breakfast? Does the College Canteen open for breakfast?

You will probably use a mixture of open and closed questions.

But avoid using the following types of question:

Double-Barrelled – two questions asked one after another

Eg. So do you enjoy working with animals, what's the worst case you've ever had to deal with?

the interviewee gets to choose which question to answer

2 or more questions confuse people

gives the impression that the interviewer is not prepared

Leading – a question the interviewer asks to get an answer they want

Eg. This College is great, don't you think?



How to conduct an interview for radio

In the space below tell us what the purpose/focus of your interview is.

Remember that the interview will need to last between 2 and 5 minutes.

Use the space below to write down the questions you will be asking.

They need to follow each other in a logical order

Record your interview onto a Zoom recorder or mobile phone and save it using the name of the person being interviewed and mark "unedited".

You will need to speak clearly and politely to your guest and also listen carefully to pick up on any additional question you may wish to ask during the interview.