

Interviewing Skills for Television Production

The On-Camera Interview

PRE PRODUCTION: PLANNING AND RESEARCH

One of the first skills of interviewing is realizing that an interview is more than just a few questions you ask a person about a topic or event. An interview is like a story: it should have a good beginning, middle, and an ending.

- THE BEGINNING of the interview is called the introduction. This is the part of the interview when you introduce your guest to the viewers.

EXAMPLE: Hello, and welcome to another edition of _____ Spotlight. Today we will be talking with Jack Smith about his DJ business. Jack has been a DJ for five years and has some good ideas and stories about the DJ business.

- THE MIDDLE of the interview contains the questions you ask your guest. **Ask only open-ended questions.** Open-ended questions need more than one or two words to answer.

BAD EXAMPLE: How long have you been a DJ?

GOOD EXAMPLE: Can you tell us how you became interested in being a DJ?

Write down your questions and discuss them with the teacher. Share your questions with your interviewee. This will give the interviewee a chance to think about how they want to answer the questions.

- THE END of the interview is the conclusion. In this section, the interviewer should thank the guest and briefly summarize some part of the interview. End each interview with a "tag" – your name and the name of the school news program, the segment or another appropriate identification.

EXAMPLE: Thank you Jack for talking with us about your DJ business today. We look forward to seeing and hearing your work at next month's _____ Dance. This is AJ Brown reporting for _____ Spotlight.

CAMERA PRESENCE is an important part of interviewing. That is, *when* to look at the camera and *when* to look at the guest. Often interviewers stand like cardboard cutouts staring at the camera during the entire length of an interview. An interview is like a conversation with a friend, and the camera is just there to represent the viewing audience. When you are speaking to the audience (the introduction), you should be looking at the camera lens. When you are asking the questions, you are speaking to your guest, and you should maintain eye contact with your guest. The interviewer can even nod occasionally, showing genuine interest in the responses to the questions. If the interviewer looks away from the guest, or (gasp!) down at some questions written on an index card in their hands, he/she looks disinterested in the guest's responses. The interviewer should not look back to the camera until the conclusion. Keep looking at the guest as you thank them, and slowly turn to the camera as you begin your tag. Make these transitions smoothly, rather than an abrupt "military-style" turn.

Important tips to make your interview “professional:”

- Memorize your introductions, questions, and conclusions.
- Learn to use a microphone correctly. Hold the microphone about six inches below your chin. Use the arm that is next to the guest to hold the microphone so that you do not reach across your body when you move the microphone.
- Remain calm during the interview.
- Share the questions with your guest so they can be prepared too! This can be done just prior to the on-camera interview, or even a day before if there is adequate time.

PRODUCTION

THE VIDEOGRAPHER should practice the skills necessary for properly recording the interview. You do not want to return to the studios with a recorded interview that has the first few words or the last few words "cut off" because the videographer forgot (or did not know) to "fade" tape before and after the interview. Video cameras do not immediately start recording the split-second the button is pushed, so it is necessary to start at least 10-15 seconds prior to the start of the interview.

If a mistake is made during the interview, keep taping and have the interviewer start over. After the interviewer's tag, keep taping for 10-15 seconds while the guest and reporter smile, so that you do not have the tape go to "snow" immediately following the last word of the tag. Remember that “fading in and out makes the transitions clean. This is important when you are making the interview into a news show or program. It is very helpful when editing tapes.

BACKGROUND SCENES can add a lot visually to the interview. Avoid setting up the camera so that a flat wall or building is all the viewer sees behind the subjects. Try to use a background that adds to the content of the interview, rather than detracts from the look of the shot. If you are interviewing the art teacher, try to have the shot set up so that students can be working in the background on art projects. Perhaps you can place the camera so that finished pottery pieces are used as a background. Remember the visual appeal of the shot is just as important as the information.

THE VIDEOGRAPHER should know how to use a tripod, white balance the cameras, and set the focus. Nothing is more distracting than having the focus go in and out during the interview because the auto focus mechanism isn't quite sure where to focus. A good videographer is just as important as a good reporter when conducting an interview.

POST PRODUCTION

View and evaluate the completed interview.

Name _____ Class Period _____

Interview Notes

WHO: Name of Guest _____

1. What are some of the guest's favorite activities? Example: hobbies or sports.
2. Does the guest have any special talents? Example: dancing, drawing or writing.
3. What are some of the guest's favorite things to do or places to go on weekends or vacations?
4. What does the guest want to do when he/she finishes high school? Example: College or career plans.
5. Other interesting facts. As you talk with your guest you may learn some facts that will provide the focus of your interview.

Use this information to write your script. Do not forget to provide your guest with a list of the questions you will be asking.

Name _____ Class Period _____

Working Script

Introduction: Use information from the interview notes to write an introduction.

(Sample: Today I would like you to meet (name of guest). (Name of student) is on the _____ team. (Name) enjoys (hobby or sport), frequently visits _____ on (vacation or weekend) and likes to (talent).

Interview: Open-ended questions (at least three)

Closing the interview: It is important that your guest and the audience know that the interview is ending. Thank your guest, summarize part of the interview and end with a “tag”—your name and the name of the show.

Student Interview Presentation Evaluation Rubric

Evaluator _____

Class Period _____ Date of Evaluation _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee: _____

Videographer: _____

Date Due _____

Date turned in _____

Criteria	Comments	Points
Presentation		
Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes guest's name and title and one or two facts the viewer should know about the guest 		
Middle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains at least 3 open-ended questions 		
Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks guest • Summarizes parts of interview • Ends with a "tag" 		
Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks clearly • Speaks at appropriate speed • Maintains appropriate eye contact with camera and guest • Does not read from notes 		
Video segment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate fade ins and outs • Words were audible (not cut off) • Background was appropriate • Camera was in focus • Stayed within time limit (2 minutes) 		
Total Points		

Suggested Scale:

Excellent = 9-10 points
 Very Good = 7-8 points
 Acceptable = 5-6 points

Satisfactory = 3-4 points
 See Teacher = below 3 points

Teacher Interview Project Evaluation Rubric

Interviewer _____
 Videographer: _____

Interviewee: _____
 Date Due _____ Date turned in _____

Criteria	Comments	Points
Pre Production		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview Notes completed 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Script completed • Notes and script content match 		
Presentation		
Introduction		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes guest's name and title and one or two facts the viewer should know about the guest 		
Middle		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains at least 3 open-ended questions 		
Conclusion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks guest • Summarizes parts of interview • Ends with a "tag" 		
Delivery		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks clearly • Speaks at appropriate speed • Maintains appropriate eye contact with camera and guest • Does not read from notes 		
Video segment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate fade ins and outs • Words were audible (not cut off) • Background was appropriate • Camera was in focus • Stayed within time limit (2 minutes) 		
Total Points		

Suggested Scale:

Excellent = 9-10, Very Good = 7-8, Acceptable = 5-6, Satisfactory = 3-4, See Teacher = below 3