



Interviewing Community Members

Adapted from “How to Conduct An Interview,” Scholastic.com.

Step 1: Research, research, research. Then research some more. The only way to come up with good questions is to know everything there is to know about your subject.

Step 2: Contact the person you wish to interview. Ask when a good time would be to do the interview. Be polite! Say “please” and thank you.” Try to set up the interview in person. If this isn’t possible, then set up a phone interview.

Step 3: Read over your research and brainstorm a list of 15 questions. The more specific your questions are, the better! Never ask questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Make your interviewee talk!

Be sure to write all your questions down in a notebook, then practice asking them with a partner. Become very familiar with your questions before you go into the interview.

Step 4: Come prepared with:

- A pencil
- A notebook
- A list of good questions
- A recording device (always ask permission before recording an interview)

Step 5: Be on time! Arrive at your interview with plenty of time to spare. If you’ve never been to the place where your interview is taking place, go early and scout it out. There is nothing more unprofessional than a reporter who is late.

You can also use the time you are waiting to make notes about the surroundings. You won’t remember details later, so write them down.

Step 6: Conduct your interview in an organized, timely manner. During the interview:

- Be courteous to your subject.
- Always take time to ask for an explanation about things you don’t understand.
- Don’t be afraid of uncomfortable silences and pauses.
- Let the interview take its natural course.
- Look the person in the eye when asking questions.
- Always listen carefully to the answers. Each answer could lead to more questions or include an answer to a question you haven’t asked yet. Don’t ask a question that has already been answered. Your subject will know you weren’t listening and be insulted.
- Don’t read through your questions one right after another like you can’t wait to be finished. Conduct your interview like a conversation. One question should lead naturally into another. If you are *listening* to the answers this will come naturally.
- Take notes on what the person looked like, what the person is wearing, where he or she sat. If the interview is in an office, make notes of what is on the walls and on the desk. The objects people surround themselves with hold important clues to their personalities. Ask about any object that interests you. You’ll find some good stories!

Step 7: Even if you are recording an interview, take notes. Don't try to write every word said. It will slow down the interview. Just take down the highlights.

After the interview, while the details are still fresh in your mind, write everything down you can remember about the person you interviewed. Don't forget to make note of the sounds in the background. Take note of what is happening around you. Write it all down as soon as possible.

Later on, expand your notes by following up on things you learned in your interview with more research!

Step 8: Review your research and your interview notes. Circle or highlight quotations that you think will be good for your article. Now you're ready to begin writing.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/how-conduct-interview>