

## Audio Interview Essentials

### Preparation

Research the person you are going to interview. Make sure the interviewee knows you will not be asking them simple questions that can be found on the internet. Find previous interviews. Talk with people who know the interviewee. Get a release statement signed before starting the interview.

### The Location

Choose a location that does not contain loud background noise like street traffic, air conditioning units, or refrigerators, phones, fans, doors closing, televisions or wind. Locations that are comfortable to the interviewee like their home, school or place of business put the interviewee at ease. Describe the location including relevant objects, music, emotions, smells, views, and current weather.

### Stories

Have the interviewee tell short stories related to your questions. Try to have questions that make a beginning, middle and end to the interview. Ask for examples to clarify what the interviewee is saying. Ask the interviewee about stories you found during your research.

### Warm-up

State your name the interviewee's name, the date, the time and location of the interview at the very beginning. Start with small talk (i.e the weather or something you both have in common) to put the interviewee at ease. Thank the interviewee for taking the time to do the interview.

### Technical Stuff

Use the best microphone you have available. Try to make the microphone inconspicuous to the interviewee. Test the microphone audio levels before starting the interview. Use headphones, if possible. Reduce microphone handling noise generated by the interviewee's clothes or jewelry moving. Try not to move the microphone during the interview. Don't be afraid to ask the interviewee to repeat their answer, if you had technical difficulties getting it the first time. Record ambient room noise while the room is quiet in case you need it in post-production. Double check that you are in record mode when you start. Always bring backup batteries or a use a power outlet.

### Questions

Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Questions that contain why in them often result in better answers. Ask only one question at a time. Ask the same question a different way, if you feel the interviewee has more to offer. Make sure to ask the most important three questions you prepared before the interview. The number of questions answered is not as important as the quality of the answers.



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### Not About You

The interviewer is not the star. Keep your questions short. Avoid expressing your personal opinion, unless it is necessary or relevant to the question. Let the interviewee say as much as they want without interrupting them. Do not use verbal clues like "ok,ok", "hmm, hmm", "interesting, interesting" while the interviewee is talking. Allow the interviewee time to gather their thoughts before answering your question.

### Free Flow

Listen to the interviewees answers. Make eye contact. Show interest with your facial expressions and tone of voice. Be ready to take the interviewee in a different direction with new questions when the opportunity presents itself. Ask the interviewee to describe what they saw or how they felt, not just a list of events that occurred.

### Audience

Tailor the questions and theme of the interview to what your audience wants to know. If possible, ask your audience what they are interested in the interviewee talking about. Let the interviewee know who the audience will be before the interview begins.

### Wrap-up

Ask the interviewee if there was anything that was left out of the interview they wanted to share. Respect the agreed upon length of the interview. If needed, ask the interviewee for permission to extend the end time to a set agreed upon time. State your name, the interviewee's name, the date, the time and the location of the interview at the very end. Add any important notes as extra audio while they are still fresh in your mind.

### Post-production

Always work with a copy, not the original master version. Normalize (set to a similar volume) the audio, if needed. Decide if there is a story and theme to the interview. Decide what will keep your audiences attention. Delete any unnecessary sounds. Delete any gaps of silence.

