

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWERS

1. Relax and get comfortable before beginning.
2. Make sure the tape recorder is within reach and that you can see some indication that the machine is running. Sitting about 4 to 10 feet from the interviewee is best.
3. Bring: more than enough blank tape, pen and pad, adapter plug and extension cord, microphone if necessary, your notes for the interview.
4. Minimize extraneous noises. Televisions, typewriters, fans, air conditioners and traffic are the worst offenders.
5. Begin informally before starting the recorder, but keep these pleasantries to a minimum. Make sure the interviewee is aware when recording is beginning.
6. Begin with relatively non-controversial questions. A few short questions such as place and date of birth are good examples in most (but not all) cases. Then proceed to open-ended, but still relatively neutral questions, such as "Describe your education." Let the interviewee answer at length without interruption. When the interviewee runs down, then prompt with details if needed.
7. When you feel that sufficient rapport (calmness) has been established, proceed with the more delicate portions of the interview, generally asking non-leading and open-ended questions first on a topic and then asking more detailed questions on that topic before moving on.
8. Do not feel a need to throw in many comments. This is an interview, not a conversation. If you are asked for your opinion, try to postpone this until after the interview. Do not be evasive, however.
9. Interrupt very rarely. Even the briefest interruptions for minor clarifications can seriously disrupt a narrative. Save clarifications until the interviewee finishes answering the question. A note pad will help you remember to fill in these details.
10. Be informed, but don't be offensive about showing your knowledge and contradicting the narrator's recollections. It is possible to disagree politely or to correct an interviewee when he or she tends to distort the facts in your opinion. Be sensitive about doing this, however, and avoid becoming a cross-examiner. Resort to correcting the interviewee usually only when you think to do so Will stimulate him or her to give you more information.