

# Checklist Interview

Handout for participants

## Interview Preparation

### 1. What is the Topic?

- Why do you and/or your potential audience find the topic interesting?
- What do you still need to clarify?
- Are there any discrepancies?
- Which aspect is most important/ interesting/topical for you, your programme, and your listeners?

### ! Tip

Discuss with your editorial colleagues what might be most interesting

When dealing with a controversial topic, always consider what the arguments against your point of view might be!

Discuss with your editorial colleagues and with people holding opposing views!

### 2. Who is a Suitable Interviewee?

- Who can talk best about your topic?
- If the topic is controversial: what point of view does s/he represent?
- What do you find interesting about your interview partner?

The choice of interviewee determines how the topic will be presented.

Criteria: Who are the other media likely to invite? Should people who would otherwise be underrepresented be given a voice on your radio programme? Which element of the topic do you wish to emphasise: do you regard the mayor's opinion about the planned cultural and conference centre to be more important or that of the citizens' action group representatives?

### 3. First contacts and preliminary discussions

- Give your interviewees basic essential information (your name, radio station, programme, projected topic and length of interview):
- Find out essential information about your interviewee (name and status of the interviewee).

- Make sure that s/he is the right person for your topic: that is, that s/he really does have something to say about the topic.
- Select a suitable place and time for your interview.
- Get a general impression of your interviewee (has s/he media experience, is s/he talkative, shy, vivacious, vain, what does s/he like to talk about).
- Do not let him/her see your interview plan or what questions you will ask.

### **! Tip**

If your interviewee seems shy, you can tell him/her what your first question will be, so that s/he can prepare for it- but then you must be sure to ask the question.

## **4. Interview Plan**

- What aspect of your topic have you chosen? What is your key question?
- Into which subcategories will you divide your key question? (These then provide the backbone of your interview).

### **! Tip**

Avoid touching on too many aspects! Less is often more!

- What is your introductory question?
- Note down only key words, not fully formulated questions.
- Have you noted down the numbers and statements you want to confront your interviewee with?

### **✓ Check**

Have you all the information you need for your interview?

### **! Tip**

Practise your interview plan beforehand- either alone or with your colleagues!

## Interviews Requiring Recording Equipment:

### 5. Preparing the recording equipment:

- Do you know which buttons to press, and which sockets you need?
- Do you know how to adjust recording levels?
- Are the batteries fully charged and do you have replacement batteries?
- Do you know how to change the batteries?
- Is the micro battery fully charged?
- Have you packed a cassette?
- Is the cassette wound back to the beginning?
- Do you know how to hold the microphone?

## Conducting the Interview

### 1. During the interview

- Create a good atmosphere for dialogue / show you are interested!
- Take on your responsibilities: namely to conduct the interview for your listeners!
- Use your questioning technique:
- Ask only one question at a time!
- Short and clear questions!
- Avoid leading questions!
- Ask about actual events/experiences!
- Address your interviewees personally!
- Avoid both too open and too closed questions!
- Do not let go of your microphone!
- And above all: listen carefully!
- Ask if you do not understand something!
- Ask again if your partner does not answer the question!

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Source (translated from German):

Guennel, Traudel & Werner, Ulrike (1999): Interview ist nicht gleich Interview. Handbuch. kopaed, München

# Glossary of Journalistic Terms

The following survey briefly describes typical, idealised definitions to be found in handbooks of journalism. In practice, however, you find many overlapping forms.

## **Report**

Presentation and exposition of experiences and events, including all research sources (archives, press, interviews)

## **Constructed Contribution** **(report with authentic sounds or actual quotations)**

The editorial text has original acoustic sounds incorporated into it, such as passages from one or more interviews, background sounds, or music

## **Feature**

In-depth coverage of a topic using various structural elements (original sounds and quotations, atmosphere, alienation, fiction): "radio plays"

## **Conversation**

No clear distribution of roles between the participants

## **Column**

Ironic/personal comment on a topic

## **Radio Play**

Acoustic story, which can be based on purely fictional, literary material. Integration of various structural elements and sounds

## **Interview**

Medium of research and journalistic presentation. Journalistic presentation is characterised by the fact that the interviewer has his/her audience in mind when conducting an interview.

## **Commentary**

Expresses an opinion, reveals Connections, subjective assessment

## **News**

Brief, objective information about WHAT, WHO, WHEN and WHERE, often little or no background information

## **Reportage**

Longer form, mainly to relay atmosphere (reflection of current mood, description) and background, live or pre-recorded, incorporating various sources and sounds

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## Basic Question Techniques

### 1. Ask only one question at a time!

### 2. Open questions!

- Open questions allow interviewee to choose how to answer. Classic examples of open questions are wh-questions: why, which, what, where... from, where...to, in what way, how.  
*Instead of asking: "Was the campaign successful", ask: "How would you rate the success of the campaign?"*

### ! Tip

Beware, however, of asking too open questions. "What do you consider has been important in your life?" is a too open question. You will lose control of the conversation. And shy interviewees often feel completely at a loss, when confronted with too open questions.

### 3. Closed questions

- Closed questions are questions which one can only answer „yes“ or „no“. *"Have you already had your breakfast?"* is a closed question. A more open question would be: *"What did you have breakfast this morning?"*
- Other closed questions are questions about a time or place, which only permit one answer, instead ask unambiguous, factual questions:  
*"How old are you? How long has she been the association's chairman?"*

Closed questions should only be used for clarification: e.g. If you want to compel an evasive interviewee to give an unequivocal answer.

Sometimes closed questions can also be used to introduce a new aspect of the interview, e.g.: "Were you already an employee before the firm was taken over", ("yes") and based on this answer: " How has your workplace change under the new ownership? What effect has the takeover had on your social benefits? etc..").

#### 4. Leading questions

A particular form of closed questions. Here the answer is already implied in the question, suggesting the required answer to the interviewee.

*"Isn't Mrs X's hairstyle awful?" "Aren't you afraid of the responsibility?"*

Leading questions are taboo! They should only be employed in exceptional cases to "provoke"- but then you should expect the interview to become heated! And this could be a problem. Be warned: An interview is not a personal dispute!

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