



INTERVIEW BASICS

The microphones are positioned correctly. Your sound check is done. You and your guest have settled into your chairs. Now it's time to ask your questions. Yikes!

But don't worry. If you prepare well, an interview doesn't have to be intimidating.

Before you begin to prepare, take a few moments to imagine how your interview will flow. Ask yourself what you want your listeners to learn or understand. Why are you interviewing this person? What's the story here?

As with all stories, you'll need a beginning, a middle, and an end. Once you identify those sections, your questions then become the outline that will build a framework for the story you want to tell your audience. (More about your audience shortly.)

Think about how the action in a film moves forward with scenes and how a book moves forward with chapters. And then organize your questions in a way that moves *your* story forward. To do that, you'll need to be familiar your guest and their background.

Research is important. You'll want to find out as much as possible about the person you'll be talking with, well before you turn on the mics. The more you know, the more targeted your questions can be, and the more likely you are to end up recording a fascinating conversation — which is the whole point of the interview, right? Yes, it is because your audience wants to be fascinated, intrigued, and entertained. Otherwise, they'll move on to someone else's podcast or oral history project.

Ask yourself what your listeners — your audience — are most interested in knowing about your guest. Knowing what your audience wants will make it easier to create and organize your list of questions. In the end, audience satisfaction is your most

important consideration. If your audience isn't happy, they'll leave you. And without an audience what's the point of recording anything?

You've probably heard of "open-ended" questions, which cannot be answered with one word — such as *yes* or *no*. Make sure all the questions on your list are open-ended. For example, instead of asking, "Are you excited about the launch of your new book?" ask something like this: "What happened while you were writing this book that you didn't expect?"

And finally, *please*, let your guest talk! A good interviewer provides structure and context for their guest, without interjecting a lot of personal commentary. Only refer to yourself if it leads directly into another question. For example, "When I wrote my book, I struggled with procrastination. Did that happen to you?" Listen closely so you can ask insightful follow-up questions that your audience will want answers to.

Interview preparation is the key to a good recording session, less editing time, and a good experience for your listeners. With your list of insightful questions in hand, you'll be able to relax, put your guest at ease, and then capture some fascinating stories.



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