

MODULE 5

INTERVIEWING: PART 1

KEY OBJECTIVES

1. To understand what an interview is and when they happen.
2. To discuss relevant and interesting questions.
3. To identify potential interviewees for project.
4. To carry out an in-person interview.
5. To create a story from the interview for the project.

KEY FEATURES

1. To know exactly who it is you are interviewing through research.
2. To compile concise and relevant questions to ask your interviewee.
3. To be prepared to listen and follow up where needed.
4. To use the interview as an opportunity to secure the information you want.

Interviewing is always a popular activity in the Write2 programme, as it allows your writers to actually put their communication skills to use. It is always recommended to run this module over two to three sessions. The reason for this being is that it enables your team to come to terms with what interviews are, determine who they are going to interview, what they are going to ask them and then finally conduct the interview.

WHEN AND WHY DO WE INTERVIEW

This is a great starting point for your interviewing experience. It will enable your young writers to consider what knowledge they have of interviews and where they may be encountered. The keys situations you would expect to hear your team talking about would be the following:

1. Applying for a job.
2. Applying to college or university.
3. Police interviews.
4. Market research.
5. In the media (tv, radio, newspaper etc).

From there the team might recognise that interviews are being carried out for a number of reasons, such as:

1. To secure information.

2. To verify information.
3. To ask questions that have never been asked before.
4. To entertain their audience.
5. To educate their audience.

WHO TO INTERVIEW?

While you may not be able to secure the likes of Barack Obama or Justin Bieber just yet, there is nothing wrong with aiming high for your publication. However, to give your writers the chance to get comfortable with interviewing and build up their confidence at speaking to people they are unfamiliar with. It is always a great idea to consider interviewees a little closer to home, those who you writers might resonate with.

Consider a Head Teacher or even a school governor, a parent who has an interesting job – great to inspire your writers as well, or a parent who has done some amazing community work that you would like to shine some light on. Then there is also the option to consider another young person who has achieved something notable.

One of the key things we have found through our work in schools and with community groups is that young people often do great things which go unnoticed. There could be someone involved in sports or acting or does something different altogether or that has a story to tell and is worthy of a feature in your publication.

Our teams in the past have interviewed some incredible people with great stories, from Head Teachers to students to governors, to both active and former pupils to Patrons of their charities such as comedian Chris Ramsey, to the former Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Vera Baird QC. What you have to remember is, people, more often than not, like to talk about themselves and if they can be inspiring to a team of writers, then they will be happy to take part.

Once you have decided upon who you will be interviewing, you can have your writers put together an invitation to the interviewee, detailing the key information they will need to know. Writing letters or emails is another great skill for them to develop, while identifying the key information your interviewee will require to determine their response to your invitation.

KNOW YOUR STUFF

The key thing to a successful interview is having your team find out as much as they can about the person they are interviewing prior to meeting them. This is obviously done through research. Whether it be online research, conversations with other people or just their own personal knowledge. It is key to have some sort of background info on the person your writers will be talking to. This will allow them to prepare suitable questions which will be done in advance of the interview; so that they are prepared.

Once it is established who you are interviewing it is worth asking the person for background information to evoke some great questions from your writers. Finding out where someone works can encourage some fantastic ones or even where they went to school or what their connection is with your team.

QUESTIONS

Like we always say to our writers when working with them on interviews, you may only get one shot at speaking with this person, so make your questions count. Don't waste time on asking questions which have no relevance, encourage them to ask those that will give them the answer they are looking for.

Think about who will read the interview and what they might like to know

TOP TIP

Avoiding closed questions important when interviewing as you want your team to get more than a Yes or No from your interviewee

about this person. Ensure your writers understand that they determine the flow of the interview by the questions they ask. This is why we advise you plan the questions with the team and talk them through, in advance of the interview.

A discussion around closed questions while planning what is going to be asked is a great way to explain to your team the pitfalls these types of questions lead to. Providing your team with time to really think about how they ask a question and the response they hope to get will be helpful.

Talking through the questions will avoid duplication and provide an opportunity to find out why that specific question is relevant. There will be those questions that come up which writers, particularly the youngest of writers will be intrigued to find out an answer to. These tend to be around favourite foods, dogs and colours and while we don't expect you to avoid these if they are important to your writers, it might be worthy of grouping

TOP TIP

Assigning roles to ensure the smooth running of your interview is hugely beneficial. Consider who is taking pictures, who is meeting your guest at reception etc.



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them into a quick-fire round of questions at the end of the interview, for a bit of fun.

You will find a list of questions some of our writers have asked over the years in the resources section of this module to help if your team are struggling.

Once the final decision around what is being asked is made, create a document with the questions and the names of who will be asking them to distribute amongst your team. We always find that this keeps them on track and also allows them to support their peers if they are so absorbed in the interview, they forget that it is their turn to ask their question.