




TIPS ON HOW TO INTERVIEW

1. LISTEN! An interview is NOT a dialogue. The whole point is to get the narrator to tell his/her story. Listen for clues and leads. Be alert and ready to follow up.
2. BE CURIOUS! Ask the narrator to explain things to you; define words and phrases you're not familiar with; describe physical things.
3. ASK ONE QUESTION AT A TIME! If the narrator hears a string of questions, he/she usually only answers the first or the last question.
4. SMILE AND NOD YOUR HEAD! Look at the narrator and encourage him/her with your eyes and body. If he thinks he is boring you, he'll stop talking.
5. SILENCE CAN BE GOLDEN! Give your narrator a chance to think of what he/she wants to say. Keep quiet and wait—count to ten slowly before asking another question or repeating the question. Relax and write a few words on your notepad.
6. DO NOT INTERRUPT A GOOD STORY! BUT, if the narrator digresses, guide him/her back to the topic as politely as you can. You might say, "That's very interesting, but I'd like you to talk about...."
7. DO NOT CHALLENGE OR CONTRADICT THE NARRATOR! The interview is not an interrogation. You are just collecting as much information as possible.
8. TRY TO AVOID "OFF THE RECORD" INFORMATION. Ask him/her to let you record the whole thing and promise the narrator the opportunity edit the interview or have it erased later.
9. END THE INTERVIEW AT A REASONABLE TIME (USUALLY 60-90 MIN.)
Always ask if there is anything else he/she would like to talk about or go back to. Pause before thanking him/her and turning the recorder off.
10. THANK THE NARRATOR AND HAVE HIM/HER SIGN THE RELEASE FORM.

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