

## *A Student Guide to . . .* **INTERVIEWING**

Your science journalism article will be more lively and interesting (and more likely to be published) when original quotes are included. Talking to one or more experts provides additional perspectives on your topic. By following some basic interviewing techniques, journalists (you) can plan and conduct an effective interview. Interviews are best in person, but phone interviews (and even e-mail messages) can provide useful information.



### ***Before the interview . . .***

~ Plan and write down your questions - ideally no more than 5. Place the most important questions at the top of your list in case time is limited. Avoid 'yes' or 'no' questions if possible.

*The more you get your interviewee to talk, the better!*

~ In order to prepare relevant questions, do some basic research on the person you will interview.  
~ If interviewing is new to you, practice a few times with a teacher or classmate.

### ***During the interview . . .***

~ Identify yourself as a journalist. You might say something like  
"Hello, my name is Jennifer Smith and I am a reporter for SciJourney news, a science news publication sponsored by the National Science Foundation."  
This establishes you as an authentic journalist and means that whatever is said is 'on the record'.

*Although you are a high school student, you are a journalist and you have an important job to do.*

~ Either audio record the interview or take some notes. If recording, ask permission. Be sure to ask and to write down the spelling of your interviewee's name - no matter how simple it may sound. A John Smith might spell his name as 'Jon Smyth'.

*Never, ever misspell a name in your article!*

~ Listen to your interviewee's answers. If something surprising or unexpected is said, it might be better to follow-up with a question *not* on your list.

*Often the best information comes from questions you did not think of.*

~ Do not worry about silent awkward moments between questions. Actually, your interviewee may feel the need to keep talking if there is a silent pause- interesting comments might emerge.

### ***Following the interview . . .***

~ At the end of your interview, always ask, "Is there anything else you would like to say that I did not ask about?" Sometimes things are added that may be quite useful in your story. And always, thank your interviewee for their time!

***Remember - Have confidence in yourself and do not be intimidated by the adults you are interviewing.  
It's okay to ask questions - it's your job!***