

The Professional Interview

First course, Second grading period, Week 1

Essential to radio, the interview requires carefully crafted questions and research, an interest in people and curiosity about the subject discussed, and a belief that the opinions and information the interviewee will provide are relevant and important. It requires good preparation of the host and research. This lesson polishes interviewing skills that were introduced in the first course.



Enduring Understanding

Print and electronic journalists interview sources to get information —facts, reliable and insider information, reasons, and explanations of processes and outcomes — and opinions.



Essential Questions

How should one prepare for an interview? What type of question elicits the strongest answers? What happens after the interview?



Objectives and Outcome

- Students will understand the equipment check that should take place before an interview.
- Students will do research and prepare questions before the interview.
- Students will understand the importance of their body language and voice quality during the interview.
- Students will get sufficient, substantive, and interesting tape for editing.



Suggested Time

Two to three days



Resources and Materials

The school nurse, a nutritionist or someone with knowledge of food and diet who will be willing to be interviewed by students

“The Craft of Interviewing,” *Announcing*, pages 239-262

“The Interview,” *Writing for Television, Radio and New Media*, pages 224-229

“Interviewing,” *Radio Production*, pages 80-101

“Interview with Martin Lacey,” *Radio Production*, CD.



Procedure

Pre-interview preparations

1. Teachers should review the information found in their textbook(s) and resources. There is much information available on interviewing. You will need to decide what should be shared in this introduction and what you will cover later in assignments that require interviews. The following suggestions will give students the foundation upon which to build their interviewing techniques.
2. A short interview segment may be played at the beginning of class to focus students' attention on the interview. Discuss the quality of the sound. How do they know if the interview was conducted in a studio or on the street?

Review the equipment that students need to conduct the interview. Write a checklist together so students are invested in the process and understand the importance of having a disc/tape in the recorder and a back-up in the bag, a microphone that is working and all equipment they will need in their carrying case. Electronic journalists should have a reporter's notebook and pen with them and in it a prepared list of facts and questions that proceed in a logical order.

3. Review the types of interviews that take place on radio: opinion, information and personality. What is the purpose of each? What kind of preparation is required of each? What is the focus of the interview about to take place? Have the students write a focus statement about what the subject of the interview will be. Make it very specific and no more than three sentences, but also tell students to prepare to be flexible and deal with unplanned valuable information as it arises. They should ask questions as follow up to responses. In other words, stick to the script if it makes editorial sense. Don't if other issues should be discussed as the interview proceeds.

4. Review the forming of questions. For radio, it is essential to write questions that get more than yes or no responses. Occasionally, the "Did you hit your boyfriend in the middle of the lunch room?" type of question will be asked, but even this requires a follow-up question to know why. The interviewee is providing substantial content of MOS segments, talk shows, news wraps and other programs. Make sure to mic both your questions and answers.

Play several examples of interviews. Discuss the questions that were included in the broadcast. Have students write questions they think should have been asked to elicit the additional actualities that were used. Share these. What difference does the questioner's voice timber and tone make to the quality of the audio and the sense of engagement in the answer?

5. Discuss the professional conduct and dress expected of the interviewer — from setting up an interview and asking for permission to record to the shine on the shoes and attitude expressed in the voice. They should not slouch, but exhibit good posture to communicate respect for the interviewee.

Remind students that the interviewee must be told when the tape is recording both in person and as a phoner or tape synch/remote.

Discuss off-the-record issues.

6. Tell students that they will be interviewing a knowledgeable source on the value of breakfasts, impact of desserts on weight and health and alternative non-fat treats. They are to come to class with 10 questions on these topics to ask the expert and to dress in their school best. If you have it, give students a vitae on the interviewee and any relevant reading material on their specialty. Have students conduct a Web search and read what they glean from it of the person and/or his or her specialty. Have the students write a three-sentence summary of the main points expected of the interview.

Remind students that they are to listen carefully and to ask the interviewees to restate answers if they cough, get off mic, do not answer the question, if there is suddenly background noise (a plane going over), are not clear, or if they are unfocused in their responses. They should check off any of their questions that are asked by other students so they do not repeat the same question unless they feel the answer is incomplete in a substantive way.

The interview

Be professional in appearance as well as in preparation for the interview. Discuss how students feel about themselves in the clothes they are wearing. Do their clothes give them a sense of authority and purpose? Do they feel prepared for the interview?

Introduce the guest speaker. Students will proceed to first get the person's name and official ID on tape. They then will ask their open-ended questions, which, if time permits, have been reviewed by the teacher for substance ahead of time.

Post-interview

After the guest speaker has left, review the responses they received:

- Did they get information that could be edited and used in a segment about the value of breakfasts, impact of desserts on weight and health, and alternative non-fat treats?
- Are there news or news pegs in the interview? Why is it current?
- Does the interview humanize the subject?
- Is it specific?
- Does it put the ideas in a larger context?
- Who else could be interviewed to praise or contradict, to shed more light on the subject at hand?

Which questions were the best? What question do they wish they had asked? Which three responses would they use in a news wrap about nutrition? Teen obesity? Eating healthy?

Archive the entire taped interview for possible future use. It may be used in the later lesson on logging tape.



Homework

- Do research on the topic of the interview.
- Write a three-sentence focus statement about what you intend this interview to cover.
- Write questions in a logical flow and order.
- Know the subject as well as you can from the research you have done BEFORE the interview takes place.
- Be able to reference studies and reports that are relevant to the topic. Review material that sets this information in a broader context.
- Study and know the work of your guest.
- Ask students to read the pages in the textbook(s) that pertain to interviewing.



Assessment

This lesson introduces students to preparation for an interview, posture during an interview and post-interview activities. Interviewing, with all its components, is one of the skills that they will continue to hone during the year and future years for those who remain in radio broadcasting.

You may wish to quiz them on the basic techniques and preparation for interviewing. The application of the information presented in this lesson will take place in the following lessons.

Have they crafted questions that elicit more than yes and no responses? You might have them review the response that each question received.



Academic Content Standards

Formulate open-ended research questions and apply steps for obtaining and evaluating information from a variety of sources, organizing information, and presenting research (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.R.1)

Formulate original, open-ended questions to explore a topic of interest; design and carry-out research (DCPS English Language Arts, 11.R.1)

Revise writing to improve the topic/idea development, organization, language/style, word choice, and the tone in light of the audience, purpose and formality of the context (DCPS English Language Arts, 9.W.5)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Interviews are staples in news, documentaries, features, educational programs and talk shows.

Demonstrate how to obtain information to use in writing a story. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate writing processes used for various journalism media. States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Apply knowledge of audio equipment for productions, including basic recording equipment, equalizers, mixing consoles, and quality-monitoring equipment. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Apply Knowledge of equipment and skills related to audio production, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Knowledge: Journalism teachers understand: 7. The writing process as it relates to journalism (brainstorming, questioning, reporting, gathering and synthesizing information, writing, editing, and evaluating the final media product). (Standard #1A — Knowledge of Curriculum and Content/Classroom, Standards for Journalism Educators, Journalism Education Association and the Scholastic Journalism Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication)

Preparing for an Interview

Interview: Meet a person to ask questions to get information or to confirm facts or ideas. You must prepare before you conduct your interview. Here are some steps to help you and your interviewee have the best experience.

STEP ONE: Select the Best Person to Interview

- What do you want to know or to confirm? State this in a focus statement of not more than three sentences.
- What qualities or background should your source have?
- Who are you going to ask for an interview?
- Why is this individual the best choice?

STEP TWO: Ask for an Appointment

- Politely contact the person by phone, a note or e-mail to ask for an interview appointment.
- Make it clear that you are from the Radio Production class or school radio station and that you want to record the conversation. You should ask the interviewee for permission to record when you ask for the interview appointment.
- Be prepared to tell the person why you have chosen him or her.
- Make the person feel important. Don't say, "I have to do this project for school, please talk to me." Think of why this person will be fun and important to meet. This person has information that only he or she can provide or confirm.

STEP THREE: Read for Background

- What do you know about the topic?
- What should you read to know more about the time period, person or issue?
- Have others written about this person or the person's point of view and/or work? Read and take notes.
- Has this person ever written a newspaper article, journal article or book on the topic? Do not go into the interview ignorant of this information.
- What can this source confirm? How can this source enhance your understanding?

STEP FOUR: Questions and Purpose Should Correspond

- Write 10 questions that require the interviewee to give more than a yes or no answer.
- Brainstorm some questions with a partner. Together, you will prepare questions to get different kinds of information.
- Think through different ways of getting information and relating to the subject of the interview. For example, ask if the interviewee has a yearbook or photo album with pictures of her when she was your age or in school. Ask if she would be willing to show it to you. This may help you to relate to your interviewee and to your topic.
- As you plan for the actual interview, don't neglect to prepare for the initial introduction. Some of this preliminary chatting may give you insight and provide useful actualities so plan to record it as well.
- Don't forget your main focus, the reason you are interviewing this person.

STEP FIVE: Mind Your Manners and Be Professional

- Dress appropriately. You are on an official assignment. Dress to show respect to your interviewee and to represent your school well.
- Be sure to check that the recorder and microphone are working before you leave home. Do you have all the needed equipment in the field kit?
- A notebook and pencil or pen are important accessories to your recording field kit.
- Introduce yourself. Greet the interviewee with a handshake.
- Be sure to get basic information on tape. Start the interview by having the interviewee say his name and title. That way you will get both correct pronunciation and identification on the tape. Be very polite when asking a lady for her age, if pertinent to your topic. Ask if she is willing to share her age with you.
- Do a sound check to be sure you are getting the best tape quality.
- Remember to wear the headphones so you know if there is a sound problem. It is OK to ask the interviewee to repeat something.
- Make eye contact. It is important to show your interest in the person and topic in this manner.
- Don't attempt to write down every word said.
- Remember/record gestures and body language, details from the room. Note what the interviewee is wearing or any mannerisms.
- Listen attentively.
- Be ready to ask follow-up questions.
- Enjoy the experience.

Codes of Ethics

First course, Second grading period, Week 1

In addition to mastering the technical skills required to produce a radio program, students need to understand the responsibilities and ethical decision-making that are expected of professional journalists. These are stated in codes of ethics.



Enduring Understanding

Ethical decision-making in journalism is a process, subject at times to individual judgments of reporters, editors and news directors and at other times to policies and principles of news organizations.



Essential Questions

Why do media organizations have codes of ethics? How might student media apply these codes to their work?



Objectives and Outcome

- Students will become acquainted with the codes of ethics of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the Society of Professional Journalists, the American Society of Newspaper Editors and other professional media organizations.
- Students will understand that a code of ethics is a living document that reflects daily decision-making and serves as a guideline for self-evaluation.
- Students will understand that professional media organizations review their codes of ethics at intervals.
- Students will write a personal code of ethics.
- Students who run a radio station will write or review their code of ethics.
- Through the study of professional codes of ethics, students will understand the particular responsibility that is placed on journalists in a democracy — and on them as scholastic journalists.



Suggested Time

Two to three days



Resources and Materials

Codes of Ethics and Principles of Conduct are found at the following professional media organizations' Web sites:

- Radio-Television News Directors Association Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (www.rtnda.org/ethics/coe.html)
- Statement of Principles of Radio and Television Broadcasters (<http://www.nab.org/newsroom/Issues/NAB%20Statement%20of%20Principles.html>)
- Poynter Institute (<http://www.poynter.org/subject.asp?id=32>) Ethics section includes “10 Questions for Ethical Decisions,” “Guiding Principles,” “Tip Sheets” and other resources.
- Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp). This site also has Ethics News.
- American Society of Newspaper Editors (www.asne.org/ideas/codes/codes.htm). This site has the ASNE code of ethics and links to other media codes.

Codes of ethics for IFJ, British NUJ, Burundi Press and U.S.'s Society of Professional Journalists, Radio Production, CD-ROM

“Ethical Issues,” *Announcing*, pages 166-171.



Procedure

1. Help students define ethics. What does it mean to be ethical? If someone is appearing before an ethics committee, what might the committee be considering? On the board have the class draft a definition of ethics. If necessary, compare the student definition to that found in the dictionary.

What is the difference between laws and ethics? In what ways are the goals of laws and ethics the same?

2. Introduce students to the Code of Ethics of the Radio-Television News Directors Association. Read section by section through the code to highlight its points, what they mean, and why they may be included. Why might a journalist do well to memorize the six section heads?

3. Divide students into groups. Give each group a different code of ethics. See the list in the “Resources and Materials” section of this lesson for these codes. Ask students to compare and contrast this second code with that of RTNDA. What principles are the same? What additional ideas are presented? Have groups report any additional concepts to the class. If time allows, give each student a code of ethics from a different state's newspaper. At the ASNE site, you will find codes of more than 25 newspapers around the country. These could be given in class or used for homework.

4. Have students share their discoveries about the codes of ethics of local newspapers. Do they share many of the elements of the media professional organizations? What additions are found to address local issues?

5. Have students give examples of ethical and unethical conduct that might take place while recording and editing an interview. Examples of unethical behavior might include covertly recording a phone conversation and editing a tape so that it changes the intent of the speaker.

6. Have students discuss what they would want in their school's media code of ethics. Are there principles that can be shared by those who work on newspaper, yearbook, literary magazine, radio, television and Web staffs? What guidelines would radio students need that are particular to their medium? Draft a code of ethics in class and/or review the existing code found in the student radio station manual.



Homework

After the first day of class, give students the following assignment: Write a comparison and contrast of three codes of ethics. What concepts do they share? Which has a different concept from the others and why do you think this organization includes this guideline? In your essay include why such codes of ethics are developed.

After the second day of class: Draft a personal code of ethics. From the codes and creeds studied in class select the ideas that you would most want to follow as a student journalist. Write the code in your own words.



Assessment

Students were involved during class activities, the comparison-contrast paper is well organized and reveals an understanding of the purpose of codes of ethics, and the personal code of ethics demonstrates an understanding of what entails ethical behavior.

Students may also be asked to memorize the main sections of the RTNDA Code of Ethics.



Academic Content Standards

Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate the validity and reliability of primary and secondary source information (e.g., the motives, credibility, and perspectives of the author; date of publication; use of logic, propaganda, bias, and language; comprehensiveness of evidence). (McRel, Language Arts, Writing, Standard 4, Grades 9-12, #4)

Describe the controlling idea or specific purpose of passages and paragraphs, and determine the essential elements that elaborate it.
(DCPS English Language Arts, 10.I.3)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Professional electronic media organizations establish codes of ethics and professional conduct “to foster the highest professional standards, promote public understanding of and confidence in electronic journalism, and strengthen principles of journalistic freedom to gather and disseminate information.” (RTNDA, Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct)

“Journalism demands of its practitioners not only industry and knowledge but also the pursuit of a standard of integrity proportionate to the journalist’s singular obligation.” (ASNE, Statement of Principles)

Identify ethical responsibilities and how they relate to the degree of influence the media has on individuals. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Exhibit knowledge of ethics and legal issues related to journalism and broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Demonstrate professional conduct and a professional code of ethics. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Exhibit knowledge of ethics and legal issues related to journalism and broadcasting, States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)