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Title: Mock (or Shock) Interview

I. Students need assistance in brainstorming questions before what may be a difficult interview. Whether it's a coach, administrator, community member or peer, journalism students have to be prepared to conduct a proper interview. Those interviews are more difficult when the interviewee may be emotional or have a difficult time talking about an event or incident. Sympathy and empathy are important on the part of the interviewer.

II. Students will understand the importance of preparation prior to a difficult interview. They will also recognize the importance of sympathy and empathy. Note-taking, fact-checking and writing leads will also be emphasized.

III. How do I ask questions that are may be difficult to ask?

How do I handle myself verbally and nonverbally during an interview?

How do I fact-check a story?

IV. Activity

- Watch a clip of Dustin Hoffman interviewing two different people in *All the President's Men*.

- Students will discuss what he did verbally and nonverbally to put the interviewee at ease.

- Tell students they will be interviewing a person about an incident. The tricky part here is deciding on something that you as a teacher are comfortable sharing. I tell my students that they're going to interview someone who was carjacked at knifepoint and robbed because this happened to me. A teacher could talk about a pet dying, a car accident, losing a job or whatever other event he or she can talk about honestly and comfortably. The trick is to tell them the minimum and not let on that it's you they'll be interviewing. They may record with their phones, but tell them you want to see notes.

- In small groups, students will brainstorm questions to ask. Remind them to introduce themselves and to begin with asking how to spell names. Tell them the person will arrive in exactly 10 minutes.

- When students are ready, walk out the door, come back in, sit down and say "I understand you want to interview me for the paper." After the initial shock, they will begin. Don't give up too much information. Answer in a way that makes them ask further questions; make them dig for it.

- When you're done, give them feedback on the way they asked the questions and what you saw.

- This can also be done with an outsider. We once interviewed a student who nearly lost his leg in a tubing accident. The story became more interesting when he shared becoming addicted to

morphine in the hospital. He was fine with sharing his story, and it's a great way to do something as a group for the first time.

V. Assessment

You can practice all aspects of the interview process, and writing explosive leads is easy with this lesson. Students will write the story, and since you're the interviewee, you know when information is incorrect. I sometimes choose a winning story and share it on the Elmo to go over what made the story stand out. It doesn't hurt to choose a few obvious errors and go over those as well.