



## *The basics of preparing, conducting, and editing an interview; with special emphasis on public officials and expert sources.*

- 1 Interviews may be conversational, but they are not casual conversations. Organization is essential, as is attention to detail and a firm will. The process also begins well before you talk with the other person, be it face to face, on the telephone or over the Internet. The intensity of your preparations may vary depending on the gravity and importance of the interview.

The first thing to determine is your goals: Do you want to obtain specific information? If so, what? Even if you're working on a long-term project and are just interested in "learning more," do your best to determine what you'd like to learn. Based on your goals, compile a list

- 2 of questions you'd like to ask. They can be highly specific ("What were you doing at noon on June 12,



2021?") or general in nature ("Tell me about your work"), as required. Err on the side of more questions rather than fewer, and prioritize them as you go. Ensure that your list also includes the most basic questions: Is the interview on the record? Even if you know the subject's name (and presumably you do), you should always ask and confirm the spelling; if appropriate, get the name of his or her organization and title. If there's any other basic information you need for the article – say, if it's on young entrepreneurs born in your state, you'll need to ask his or her birthplace and age – make sure those questions are on the list.

- 3 Once you've got your list of targeted questions ready, turn them into a list of general topics that you will have in front of you for the interview. Ultimately, it's better to work with a topics list rather than a series of carefully worded questions. You should strive to create a natural, though purposeful, conversation. Gather the tools of the trade:

voice or video recorder (make sure it's fully charged and tested; if you're really cautious, you can bring a backup unit), reporter's notebook, pen or pencil (always carry a backup), laptop. If the interview is taking place in person and you have business cards, bring some with you.

- 4 If you're having to deal with press officers or public relations people to arrange the interview, they may ask you for a list of topics you want to cover. While you can give them a general sense of topics, resist agreeing that you will stick only to those topics and definitely don't send the questions you've compiled. Reserve your right to ask any question that you deem relevant during the interview itself. Do not let anyone get you to agree to have quotations approved before they are used in your story; it is not good journalistic practice and does not serve your audience in an honest way. This has become an important ethical issue in contemporary American journalism.

## VOCABULARY:

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**Detail:** Detalle

**Will:** Deseo/búsqueda

**Goal:** Meta

**Long-term:** A largo plazo

**Entrepreneurs:** Empresarios

**Err of:** Pecar de

**Strive:** Esforzarse