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More Interview Tips

These are very general tips which apply differently to different situations. Use your judgment to decide when and how to use them.

Dress appropriately, or at least dress with a purpose. Your appearance will influence the way interviewees respond to you.

Try to be unique, so it's not just another interview rehashing the same questions the subject has answered many times before. Don't push this too far though — if you try to be cute or disarming it may backfire.

Be honest. Sometimes it's tempting to lie or omit important information when securing an interview. This isn't just unethical, it will damage your career in the long run.

Don't have an attitude if you want a quality interview. A confrontational approach is less likely to get good information.

Stay neutral. Try not to ooze bias. Don't appear to be persuaded by the subject's opinions. Don't judge or directly criticise the subject.

Don't interrupt. This can upset the subject's train of thought.

Minimize your own vocals (in video and audio interviews). Ask questions clearly and succinctly, then let the person speak without any more words from you. Learn to react silently as the subject talks — rather than saying things like "uh-huh, right, I see", use nods and facial expressions.

Don't over-direct. Try not to give the subject too many instructions or be too specific about what you want them to say. In most cases it's better to let them speak freely.

Show empathy. Often you will need to cover sensitive or distressing topics. Show some compassion for the subject without getting too emotional. Ask for permission before asking difficult questions, e.g. "Is it okay to talk about...?"

It's not about you. Don't talk about yourself or add your own opinion. Your questions can be long enough to add information or interest about the topic, but the interviewee is who the audience wants to hear from.

Take an interest in psychology. Interviewing is very closely associated with psychology. The better you understand how people think, the better you will be able to extract their thoughts from an interview.

When you finish the interview, put your notebook or recorder away and have an informal chat. As well as being polite and leaving a good impression, you might be surprised at what additional information flows when the subject thinks it's all over and is more relaxed.

If you missed a question from the interview, you might be able to call the subject back later and get the answer. You get one shot at this — call them back twice and you'll probably be out of luck. Obviously the call-back will be more difficult for video interviews, but you might still be able to voiceover the answer yourself during the story.

That's the end of this tutorial. If you would like to discuss anything covered here, please feel free to join our [forums](#).

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