

## Interview Techniques

The purpose of an interview can be: to communicate expert analysis or in-depth information on a subject (the “talking head” interview); to show public opinion or knowledge about a particular issue (“streeters”); or to hear what important characters have to say about the issue or event they are involved with. The following are some guidelines, tips and technical considerations to help you make the most out of the experience.

### The Interview Process

- Introduce yourself and your crew when you meet with the interviewee.
- Explain in simple language what will happen in the interview, what kinds of information you’re interested in, and what the footage will be used for.
- Have the person sign an appearance release form. Remember what constitutes informed consent, and allow them the time they need to understand and agree to what you’re asking.
- Remember, and let your interviewee know, that you can stop and repeat a question or answer if you ‘flub’ it the first time, and that you can stop the camera at any time if she is feeling uncomfortable or needs a break.
- When the camera starts rolling, ask the interviewee to state her name and spell it, and, if applicable, state the name of the organization she works for and the title of her position.
- Do some ‘warm up’ questions to help the interviewee get comfortable with being on camera. Don’t ask your most important questions at the beginning of the interview unless you have an extremely short timeframe.
- Try to balance a respect for allowing an interviewee to tell her story in her own way with the need to stay on topic. If her story becomes too tangential, respectfully and tactfully bring her back to the topic at hand.
- Suggest to the interviewee that she restate the question within the answer. For example, if you ask what she thinks about salmon farming, it’s preferable that she answer “I think salmon farming is...” rather than “I think it is...”
- Always remember that an interview is a relationship between two people. Ensure that you are respectful of the interviewee and thank them for their participation in the project. Give her your business card or contact information in case she has any questions.

## Technical Tips

- Good audio is critical. Use a good mic whenever possible and have a crew member monitor the audio through headphones.
- In general, a location that reflects the identity of the interviewee makes for more interesting footage than a studio. For example, a ski hill looks more 'natural' for an interview with a snowboarder than a studio chair.
- When choosing your location, keep in mind what the background you use will say about your interviewee. For example, if you are interviewing a young mother, choosing a messy kitchen will give your audience a different message than a sunny playground.
- Try to reduce as much ambient noise as possible: turn off fans, radio, tv, even fridge if it is loud. Keep out of the wind.
- Use 'rule of thirds' framing if you want a traditional interview look, and position yourself beside the camera.
- Whenever possible, try not to be both the camera/audio person and the interviewer.
- Unless you're going for a silhouette effect, try not to place your interviewee with her back toward a window or bright light.
- If your interviewee does not want her face to appear, try placing her with her back toward a bright light or bright window to create a silhouette effect with the exposure. You can also frame creatively to exclude her face - such as showing hands, legs walking, back to camera, interesting and relevant images in the scene, et cetera.
- Watch your cables! Set safety is always a priority, particularly when you have multiple cables running from mics, lighting gear.