

TIMELY TIPS

Writing

Interviewing 101: Questions That Count

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn basic questions to ask in an interview, followed by more advanced questioning strategies to bring out the interviewee's opinions and emotions.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Pen/pencil
- Paper/notepad
- Recording device
- Stopwatch or timer

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

Discuss the following with your staff:

- Conduct interviews in person; avoid emails or DMs
- Read back great quotes you plan to use to ensure accuracy
- Ask the next level of the question; don't accept just one answer if you can dig deeper
- Base the next question off the answer just given
- Have a conversation and be yourself

PART 2

INTERVIEW SET-UP

- Research your topic
- Gather background information on the person you're interviewing, if possible
- Know as much about the situation, event and person as you can before forming questions and interviewing

Practice Level 1: Questions with a Partner

- **Goal:** Gather basic facts
- Start the interview here, but only spend a minute or two.
 - Where was the event?
 - When was the event?
 - Who else was there?
- **Key words to use:** How, who, what, when, list, where, tell, define, etc.

Practice Level 2: Partner Trading

- **Goal:** Gather details
- Use phrases to gather some of the details of the event:
 - How was the event planned?
 - What happened when _____?
 - How long did it take to _____?
 - Tell me what happened when _____?
- **Key Words to Use:** Explain, demonstrate, relate, show, summarize

Practice Level 3: Bring in a Guest, Teacher, Other Student

- **Goal:** Record feelings, opinions and emotions
- Use open-ended questions that are not answered with a "yes" or a "no".
 - How could you _____?
 - Why do you think _____?
 - How did the _____?
 - What's your opinion about _____?
 - How did it make you feel?
- **Key Words to Use:** How, what motive, explain, elaborate, formulate, estimate, interpret, what conclusions

PART 3

PRACTICE OUTCOME OF INTERVIEW

A great interview will gather facts, details and opinions that the writer can use for a lead of a story.

Use these story leads to guess what questions were asked in the interview.

Example 1: Backstage, the air buzzed with nervous whispers and the scent of hairspray. Costumes rustled as senior Rhys Riddle adjusted his bow tie and freshman Kati Waguespack tugged at sequined sleeves. When the curtain finally lifted, months of late-night rehearsals and line memorization came to life in front of a packed auditorium for opening night.

Example 2: The buses pulled up before dawn, headlights cutting through the fog. Sleepy musicians shuffled out, balancing instrument cases in one hand and coffee in the other, their uniforms still tucked neatly in garment bags. The day's first notes wouldn't echo until hours later, but the excitement was already humming. Katie Keating felt nervous for the district band competition.

Example 3: Empty pizza boxes were stacked in the corner of the journalism room and laughter echoed between the glowing computer screens as Camden Smith announced, "Two more hours until deadline." With midnight creeping closer, yearbook editor Elijah Gross and staff members Arely Mata and Riley Myrow clicked through last pages, racing the clock to finish their final deadline.