

Interview Questions

An interview is never just a list of questions but it is good practice to have some questions that relate to your aims and themes planned beforehand (also see our **Interview Planning** sheet)

Good questions...

Open-ended: These allow the interviewee to give an extended answer and perhaps tell a little bit of a story (E.G. “Why do you think about...?”)

Closed-ended: These questions get a one-word answer that is relevant to the interview and allows for a follow-up to be asked

Follow-ups: A question related to something that the interviewee has just said. These questions are unplanned and require the interviewer to listen throughout. They make the interviewee conversational

Superlatives: Use words of the highest quality or degree (such as best, worst, most, least, highlight etc.). This allows the interviewee to answer at length within a pre-defined boundary (E.G. “What’s your favourite question to ask?”)

Relevance: You’re unlikely to have a lot of time in an interview so make sure that your line of questioning is relevant to your aims and themes

Bad questions...

Closed-ended: These questions often get one-word answers from which you cannot build upon. These types of questions don’t bring anything extra to the interview (E.G. “What did you have for breakfast?” in an interview about politics)

Multiple questions at once: Asking more than one question at a time can confuse the interviewee and make them not know what direction to go in

Irrelevance: Questions that are nothing to do with the aims and themes of the interview. They make the interviewee go on an unwanted tangent and waste time

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Ugly questions...

Offensive: It's acceptable to challenge your interviewee but be careful not to offend them. This may make them close up and stop answering your questions, or even worse they may leave the room!

Top tips!

- Make sure the interview flows well by considering where you place and ask your questions in relation to the themes of the interview
- If you don't understand what an interviewee has just told you it is likely that the audience at home won't either. Asking participants to re-phrase and give examples is a good way to clarify what has just been said. You can even blame the audience at home for this one (i.e. "For those at home who may not know...")
- Get your interviewee to tell stories and anecdotes. The listener can relate to this
- It's a good idea to brief your interviewee on the themes of the interview beforehand but avoid giving them specific questions at this stage as they might overthink the answer and say what you think they should
- Bear in mind that some of your interviewees may never have been on radio before and that you'll have to put them at ease. Aside of briefing them you could also give them a studio tour beforehand if that's possible
- Those that have been interviewed on radio before are likely to have been asked certain questions lots of times – think outside of the box
- If you plan an interview to be seven minutes long but you've reached your aims in five, end it there. There's no point in struggling to come up with questions that are irrelevant
- Remember, planning is integral and practice makes perfect. Listen back to your interviews and think about what was good, bad and ugly!