

Sports Journalism Skill Module

Interviewing

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Understand the best techniques for interviewing
- Use your understanding of interviewing techniques to get better quotations for your stories

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – Interviewing: Getting the Story

Additional Online Support:

- www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com
- www.BlueNoseEd.com

Teach the Skill

1. Introduce Interviewing: Sports journalism relies upon observation. But like all journalism, even more than observation, sportswriting relies upon *interviewing*. Tell students that interviewing people is an essential part of sportswriting. Remind them that good interview requires preparation, research, background knowledge, good note-taking—and, sometimes, a bit of nerve.

2. Teach Interviewing:

- Tell the students that there are three main types of interview. Many interviews are mixtures of all three types. But the three basic forms are as follows:
 1. *The Informative Interview.* This type of interview is to get details that the interview subject can provide because of his or her position. Who is injured? Who is still recovering? A coach or trainer can tell you this, because he or she is the one who is making the decisions about who is ready to play.
 2. *The Opinion Interview.* Rather than seeking out the facts, this type of interview seeks out people’s thoughts and feelings. Opinion interviews are significant for two reasons. First, if the person holding the interview is newsworthy. Second, if the opinion itself is newsworthy, because it is well-expressed, popular, or simply because it is original.
 3. *The Personality Interview.* This type of interview attempts to give an accurate picture of a person in the news. Relying upon impressions, informal talk, and the subject’s emotions, the personality interview is all about getting to know someone as well as possible.
- To make the different styles of interview more vivid, do the following exercise in class. Invite student volunteers to act as journalists and their interview subjects. First, read the basic information in the table aloud. Then ask students to conduct Q and A sessions, and have the student playing the journalist change her or his approach according to the type of interview she or he is conducting.

EXAMPLE

Basic Information	Informative Interview	Opinion Interview	Personality Interview
Basketball Coach Barry Leuders has led the local squad to an 0-22 record. All 22 of his losses have come in triple overtime, and his leading scorer, Chet Leonard, just sprained his ankle. Only	Q: Coach Leuders, is there any news on the condition of Chet Leonard’s ankle?	Q:	Q:

one game remains, against the school's archrival. Despite being an optimistic kind of guy, his hair has turned completely white during the course of the season. Rumors are, he's thinking about getting out of coaching, and checking in to a monastery.			
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- Interviewing is a fine art. To become good at it, students need to master the following information.

Interviewing: Terms and Techniques		
Preparation	The Four Types of Attribution	During the Interview
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Choose an interview subject</i>—be sure you talk to the best person for the story. 2. <i>Make an appointment</i>-- just showing up is not professional. 3. <i>Research your subject</i>—get to know who the person is, what their position is, etc. 4. <i>Research your topic</i>—be acquainted with the basics, so you can ask the interviewee good questions. 5. <i>Write out your questions in advance</i>—don't trust to inspiration! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>On the record</i>—when the identity of the source is part of the story, and anything the source says can be directly quoted. 2. <i>Off the record</i>—when both the reporter and source agree that the source's name will not be used, and the information will not go into the story. 3. <i>On background</i>—when the reporter is given permission by the source to use the source's information, without saying precisely where it came from. 4. <i>On deep background</i>—when the source's material can be used, but with no allusion to where it came from. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Be professional</i>—dress well, be on time for your appointment, and be polite. 2. <i>Ask if it is OK if you use a tape recorder</i>—some people prefer not to be taped. 3. <i>Take notes, no matter what</i>—and don't be shy about asking people to repeat themselves. 4. <i>Be observant</i>—take note of the scene, and of the subject's appearance and disposition. 5. <i>Ask the questions you have prepared</i>—but don't be afraid to improvise. 6. <i>Thank the subject</i>—never forget to do this!

3. Apply the Skill: Hand out copies of the You Try It! Worksheet, "Interviewing: Getting the Story." After reading the directions, have the students get in pairs to work through the exercise. When they are done, have volunteers from each pair tell the class about their work.

QUICK SKILLS CHECK Ask students to tell you the three types of interview. Then have them tell you the four levels of attribution in journalism.

YOU TRY IT!

Interviewing: Getting the Story

GOAL

There's no quicker path to better sportswriting than to become a crack interviewer. As you write your piece for the Blue Nose Sportswriting Contest, be sure to hone your interviewing techniques so that you get all the information you need for your story, expressed in a quotable, memorable way.

DIRECTIONS

The best way to become a good interviewer is to practice at it. For this exercise, pick out someone to interview—a coach, an athlete, a fan—and use the following graphic organizer as a guide, filling in the spaces in the table as you go.

Interview Subject: _____.
Time and Place: _____.
Main Topic of Interview: _____.
<i>Research your Interview Subject:</i> 1. <i>Why is this person worthy of being interviewed?</i> _____.
2. <i>What is this person's position, expertise, and known outlooks on the topic you are investigating?</i> _____.
<i>Research your Topic:</i> 1. <i>Why are you interested in this topic?</i> _____.
2. <i>What are the basic facts of this topic?</i> _____.
3. <i>What do you think people need to know about this topic?</i> _____.
<i>Write Out Your Main Questions Here:</i>
<i>Take Notes Here (or in a separate notebook):</i>

Self-Check

Look back at your preparation for you interview, and the notes you took during the interview? Did taking the time to gather your thoughts before you started the interview help you stay focused on the story you want to write?