

Interviewing



Pathways Resource
Booklet

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Table of Contents

Interviewing on Radio.....	4
Types of Interview	4
Styles of Interviewing	5
Role of the interviewer	6
Getting an Interview	7
Broadcast Law & Interviewing - The Basics	8
The Broadcasting Services Act	11
Codes of Practice.....	11
Anti-discrimination law	11
Equal opportunity legislation	11
Broadcast Law and Legislation – Who Can You Talk To?	12
Sponsorship and Inadvertent Advertising.....	13
Planning and Preparing for an Interview	14
Organising the Interview	15
Google News.....	16
Interview Questions to Avoid.....	18
Example Interview Brief	20
Interview Brief Template	22
Cue Sheet Template	24
Conducting the Interview.....	26
Selecting a Location.....	27
Interview Preparation- Checklist.....	30
Interview Feedback Sheet.....	33

Interviewing on Radio

Interviewing brings voices from the community into your programming, meeting the aim of community broadcasting code of practice to increase community involvement in broadcasting.

It also makes your program more interesting, engaging and lends a voice of authority to topics that may be difficult or complex to explain to your listeners.



Types of Interview

News Interview:

News interviews are short and to-the-point as you may only use a grab that is less than 30 seconds

Current Affairs interview:

Longer interview which delves into issues more deeply and may last between 7-8 minutes.

Magazine interview

This is a long-form conversational style interview that could be on anything from a profile to an event or cultural or music related. It may be broken up with tracks and station IDs

Oral History

This is a form of storytelling through interviewing where the interviewee tells gives a personal account in relation to historical events.

Vox Pop

This is a short interview with a range of people consisting of one or two questions on a topic; it is usually about gathering opinions on a social, political or cultural issue.

Styles of Interviewing:

The style of interview you do will be dependent on the topic and aim of your story. The following are different interviewing styles:

Informational Interview

An informational interview is one that is used to extract facts. It is straightforward and unemotional. An informational interview would be used to facilitate the thesis of your story.

Confrontational Interview

In this style of interview the interviewer takes the role of interrogator, trying to make the talent divulge information they may not want to. Most popular in current affairs, the interviewer in this instance needs to be assertive and forceful, without getting emotional (and risking losing the audience).

Inquisitorial Interview

This is basically a combination of the informational and confrontational style interview. This interview is an attempt to explore an area in depth, but without the drama of a confrontational interview. There is opportunity for the interviewee to provide in-depth answers.

Confessional Interview

This far more emotional style of interviewing is where the talent 'bares their soul' to the interviewer. Usually a longer format interview, the confessional interview is reflective with the interviewer playing sympathetic ear. The skill with this style of interview is to not make the talent, or the listener too uncomfortable.

Conversational Interview

The interviewer as friend. Usually found in light entertainment formats, in this style the interviewer offers encouragement and a supportive ear. To make more creative content it is sometimes useful to experiment with different types of interview in situations where you would not normally use that type of interview.

Example: You might like to try a conversational style interview with a politician or a confessional interview with a convenience store worker.

Role of the interviewer

The interviewer is the “listener” asking the questions, keeping the interviewee on the topic. The interviewer controls how the interviewee presents information.

The key to interviewing is to be listening to the interviewee’s answer – not just thinking about what your next question will be.

The interviewer should:

- Choose interesting and informed guests
- Introduce interviewee and topic clearly.
- Represent the listener
- Ask clear open-ended questions- no double-barrelled questions
- Build rapport with the interviewee
- Clarify difficult concepts
- Ask for examples
- Challenge where necessary
- Avoid having a ‘private conversation’
- Keep it engaging
- Keep it to time
- Wrap it up



Getting an Interview

As a community broadcaster there are several ways to go about convincing people that talking to you is worthwhile;

- highlight the organisation's independence
- stress the importance of the issue to our listeners, that they have a need to know about the issue and need to hear that interviewee's perspective
- let them know who else you are considering interviewing and what background you have found out, particularly anything you think they would like to debate

Media liaison and public relations is big business and most organisation have PR departments; this can be a great help or a hindrance to sourcing interviewees. Major organisations, corporations and government seek to control what is said about them in the media and who speaks for them.

Always be aware of the agenda behind an interview and the level of media management an organisation has:

How handle interviewees with agendas

- Ask pointed questions and re-ask questions if you don't get an answer
- Play devil's advocate with a variety of viewpoints
- Don't let them speak for too long, feel empowered to interrupt them
- Be well researched and have facts and figures at hand before you do the interview

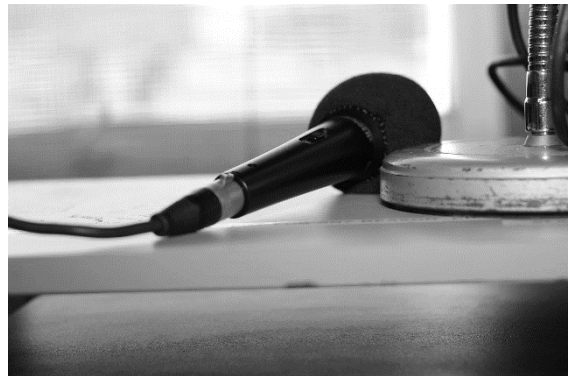


Broadcast Law & Interviewing - The Basics

When conducting live or pre-recorded interviews on community radio you must be aware of the law in relation to broadcasting, including defamation and common law surrounding discrimination and vilification.

What is defamation?

Defamation is the law to protect people's reputations, and to balance this with protecting reasonable freedom of speech. If someone thinks that you have broadcast anything that damages their reputation, they can sue you and the judge will decide if it is defamation.



If so, you could be ordered to pay fines, or damages to the person and payouts are often huge. Anything that YOU play in your program may be liable for defamation, including anything a guest says, any pre-recorded material or anything written by someone else that you put to air.

You need to understand that you, your guest, your producer if you have one, the station AND the license holder could be sued for defamation about something that you broadcast. Never think that because you are broadcasting on a community station you can take the risk because you are not being heard by enough people. Public figures and companies employ media monitors to provide weekly reports on EVERYTHING that is said in the media about them. Many stations stream online too and can be heard all over the world.

Someone can sue for defamation if:

- They think that they can be identified from what you have said. You don't have to NAME them, if you say enough about them that listeners would know them then you could still be sued. For example, if you talk about "the owner of the chicken shop at ..." people would know who you mean.
- They think that what you say will damage their reputation.

For example, people have lost defamation cases because they:

- said a person is a coward, dishonest or cruel
- said that a public figure mis-used their position to look after their own private interests
- said that someone has committed a criminal offence
- broadcast comments which make a person look ridiculous, or damaged a person's professional reputation

A lie or wrong information about a person COULD be seen as defamation, but ONLY if a judge decides that it damages that person's reputation. Big corporations with 10 or more employees cannot sue. However, individuals or groups of individuals identified in a broadcast can still sue, such as company directors, managers, CEOs etc.

How to make sure you are not sued for defamation

- Think carefully before you interview anyone. Is there a risk that they might say something that could lead to being sued? If you think there is a risk, then PRE-RECORD the interview.
- Think carefully before you read anything on air that someone else has written, CHECK IT BEFORE YOU READ IT OUT and if you have any concerns check with a supervisor

Just because someone else has written or said something it DOES NOT mean you can repeat it safely. You can still be sued.

Questions to ask yourself before broadcasting:

- Can the person be identified? Is there enough information for others to work out who the person is?
- Can you PROVE what you say is true? Under Australian defamation law this is the main thing you have to do, but if you have just heard or read something and cannot PROVE in court that it is true then you are taking a risk. Do you have evidence to support the facts? Would the people you have got information from (your "sources") be able to give evidence in court if necessary?
- Have you acted "reasonably"? Have you made reasonable attempts to get the person's response to things said about them on air? Have you included the responses in the broadcast?
- Can you trust your sources? Do they WANT to damage the person's reputation?
- Is the issue a matter of public interest? Do listeners NEED to know about this? Can you argue this in court?
- Does the broadcast talk about a person's public position? If not, then you will find it hard to prove it was "reasonable" to broadcast it.
- Put yourself in the shoes of the person being talked about. Would you want to sue to protect your reputation?
- Which parts of the broadcast are facts? Which parts are suspicions or allegations? Is it clear which is which?

- Is it important to broadcast quickly? Can you wait to get a response from the person being talked about? Can you try to? Can you explain to a court why not?

You can defend yourself against defamation by arguing that what you broadcast was “fair comment”. This means that you may comment on a matter of public interest as long as:

- the comments are based on true information
- the opinions are "honestly held" by you, not designed to harm someone or their reputation
- the opinions are “reasonably based” on true information

Dealing with defamatory content during an interview:

If someone says something defamatory in an interview there are some steps you can take to minimise the damage, but keep in mind this will not stop potential defamation action being taken

- Cut the interview off immediately
- Turn off the interviewee’s mic
- Distance yourself from the comment by saying something like “I don’t agree with that comment” and without any fuss move quickly to a track.
- End the interview off air.
- When you return to air make no further comments about the interview.



The Broadcasting Services Act

Until 1992, broadcasting in Australia was regulated by the 1942 Broadcasting and Television Act. There had been major amendments, to allow for the introduction of television, FM and community broadcasting amongst other things. The 1992 Broadcasting Act created the Australian Broadcasting Authority, replacing the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, which had significant powers over broadcasters through program standards that they had to meet. The ABA was structured to cope with new technologies and oversee all aspects of broadcasting and narrowcasting. Its main role was to supervise a new regime of self-regulation, to help broadcasting organizations to develop their own codes of practice and to investigate complaints about breaches of those codes. The ABA has now become ACMA, The Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Codes of Practice

Under Section 123 of the Broadcasting Services Act, industry groups must develop Codes of Practice in consultation with the Australian Communications and Media Authority. The Codes may cover programming requirements, fairness and accuracy in news and current affairs reporting, complaints handling and sponsorship, among other matters. The Codes outline that the sector Organisation representing the majority of licensees will be responsible for regularly reviewing and updating of the Codes. You can find a copy of the latest codes at www.cbaa.org.au

Anti-discrimination law

Each state has its own anti-discrimination laws which are in line with the Racial Hatred Act 1995.

Under the Racial Hatred Act, unlawful behaviour is defined as public acts based on the race, colour, national or ethnic origin of a person or group of people which are likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate.

Community broadcasting is obviously a public act. People can complain to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

The Racial Hatred Act was introduced in 1995, following the National Inquiry into Racist Violence, which was conducted by HREOC. The inquiry found that “the perpetuation and promotion of negative racial stereotypes, and a tendency towards conflictual and sensational reporting on race issues and an insensitivity towards and often ignorance of minority cultures can all contribute to creating a social climate which is tolerant of racist violence.”

More information on each state’s laws and HREOC can be found at:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/racial_hatred_act/index.html

Equal opportunity legislation

Equal Opportunity legislation, both State and Federal is also based on complaints from the public. Community broadcasters should be aware of behaviour on and off air which is likely to draw complaints.

Broadcast Law and Legislation – Who Can You Talk To?

Here are some suggestions of where you can find more information or advice:

Station or Program Manager – if you think you may have broken broadcasting law, the first person to speak to you would be your manager. They will then listen to the program and decide what action to take. This might be handling a listener complaint, damage control to avoid prosecution, or further training or suspension of the program. It is best to talk to them BEFORE there is a problem.

“If in doubt, check it out”

ACMA www.acma.gov.au/

The Australian Communications and Media Authority are responsible for managing broadcasting licenses in Australia, and making rulings about Codes of Practice.

Australian Human Rights Commission <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

CBAA www.cbaa.org.au/

The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia is the governing body for all community media in Australia. They are responsible for setting the codes of practice.

Sponsorship and Inadvertent Advertising

Community broadcasters can NOT play advertisements – instead they play sponsorship announcements. Sponsorship announcements can sound very similar to advertisements, but there are restrictions on sponsorship.

- Stations can play only 5 minutes per hour of sponsorship
- All sponsorship announcements must be 'tagged'.
- There must be a financial relationship between the sponsor and the station (or program.)

Anything of a promotional nature that does not comply with the above criteria COULD be classed as advertising, which is a breach of the BSA. Sometimes interviews on community stations are overtly promotional and may be in breach of the BSA.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Would I normally play / promote this in my show?
- Is it of value to my community / audience and is it 'community oriented'?
- Does it provide a significant promotion for a profit making company?

Be wary of:

- Going over the top with praise and promotion
- Giving full contact details or details of products/services including ticket prices etc
- Allowing guests on your show to make 'special offers' to listeners



The ACMA Community Broadcasting Sponsorship guidelines have some excellent examples on sponsorship and interviewing:

http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/assets/main/lib310667/community_bcasing_sponsorship_guidelines_2008.pdf

Planning and Preparing for an Interview

Choosing your topic/angle

What is the purpose of the interview?

How long will it be?

Do you need to narrow it down or can you afford to approach the topic on a more general level?

What will distinguish your interview from others?



Choosing Interviewees

Your interviewee needs to be an appropriate person to speak on the subject, people who come from a variety of backgrounds and people who are affected or involved in subtle ways.

Some people are excellent sources of information yet do not necessarily present well on air, exercise judgement in using these voices in your program, sometimes you may have to paraphrase and clarify.

Always think about why you want to speak to a particular person.

- What are they adding to the story?
- You may choose an interviewee because they are an expert/authority on a topic
- They may add an emotive or anecdotal element to the story,
- They may be witness to an event or they may be the story (profiles).
- They are affected by the issue or the wider implications of the issue
- Always think though; are they the best person to be speaking about this (or are they your brother's friend and an easy target to make to the interview?).
- Always have a backup plan in case an interview falls through.

Everyone's view is subjective, as a broadcaster you can search for authentic voices with authentic stories and always make the true source of the information transparent, this way you are allowing the audience to judge the value of opinions and factual information in light of where they originated.

Organising the Interview:

The way you ask someone for an interview makes a big difference in whether they decide to talk to you or not.

Interviews can take place either 'in person' or on the telephone.

The Step-by-step Approach

1. Introduce yourself to the person and make it clear you are the media
2. Tell the person what you are doing and why you want to interview them.
3. Tell the person what you will be asking them questions about.
4. Be polite (even if they are not)
5. Know exactly why you want to talk to them
6. Speak slowly and clearly
7. Brief your talent: Tell them how long the interview will take, arrange an appropriate time and place to do the interview, be sure to get all their contact details and try and arrange to have them ring you at an appointed time.
8. Build rapport: Have a chat, get to know them a little, BUT don't cover too much ground, leave that for the real interview.
9. Confirm details and thank them for their time

Research

Having a strong general knowledge is a great advantage for any interviewer as you will be able to draw out themes and current affairs relevant to your listeners. However, you do not need to be an expert on the topic, your role is to ask the questions your listener wants answers to.

Research your topic and your interviewee's background. It is a good idea to have a preliminary chat with your interviewee on the phone, this will also give you an idea of their vocal style and whether they will make good live talent or are more suited to a pre-recorded interview.

Research sources might include the library, public records, the internet and people you know who can provide background information. Read or listen to other interviews on the topic or with your talent in order to establish some new lines of inquiry.

If you are basing your story on an article or press release, do your best to ensure you have the correct facts. Also be mindful of where information comes from, especially when using the internet. Google News is a global news project that organises what's happening in the world to help you learn more about the stories relevant to you, this is also a helpful tool in managing research for your story.

Google News

Google uses an integrated and intuitive method for searching, based on the context for the search and related information. Wikipedia is the core website used, hence why it often appears at the top of a search results list

Advanced Search Function

- Specific Search: “[*subject matter*]” to narrow down your search results, for example:

“Scott Morrison”

- Related Website Search: [*details of item being searched on*] *site:* [*website to be searched on*], for example:

International day of disability site:abc.net.au

- Search Exclusion: [*details of item to be searched on*] – [*item to be removed from search*] – [*further item to be removed from search*], for example:

shades of blue – TV - songs

- File Format Search: [*details of item being searched on*]: [*file format*], for example:

for internal use only:pdf for internal use only: pdf site:gov.au

- Related Search: [*website*] – [*site similar to one searched on*], for example:

theguardian.com – smh.com.au

- Specific Website Search: [*website*] <*search term*>, for example:

theguardian.com <climate change>

- Type of Website Search: [*topic*] *site:* [*website*]/[*type of context*], for example:

Donald Bradman site: google.com/newspapers

Tip: Use separate searches when seeking out multiple pieces of information, as opposed to use of the “and” & “or” commands

Preparing questions

When preparing questions, a good place to start is with the 5Ws and the H, then expand from there.

Who, what, where, why, when & how?

Write your questions down as this will help you avoid a mental blank, but in order to sound less rehearsed you might like to use simple bullet points. Don't waste your interviewee and listeners time with too much chat and pleasantries; if your introduction is solid you should get to the guts of the interview more easily.

Your first question is very important and should set the tone for the interview, cutting to the main angle you wish to explore. Don't ask 'closed' questions. A closed question is a question that will get a 'yes' or 'no', or one sentence answer. These answers are usually not that useful (particularly in radio that relies on sound).

Make sure you ask a question. Be careful not to replace questions with statements, you won't get proper answers. Sometimes it can be useful to include a statement with a question. A statement can give background information or a context for the question to your listener and your talent. However, be careful to separate the statement from the question.

Keep your questions short. If your questions are too long, or you ramble, you will simply confuse your talent and will not get a clear or whole answer. And, if the question is too confusing for your talent, they will confuse your listener. Don't ask more than one question at once. You'll only get one answer.

Avoid 'leading' questions. Don't lead your interviewees into a particular answer or trap them in a corner. Most leading questions are based on assumptions which may prove false. This will ultimately make you the interviewer look bad. By asking leading questions you are putting words into your talents mouth, draw the truth out of them with well written questions instead.

Progress from point to point. Try to maintain logic to your interview. Each question should follow from the previous. If the relationship between two questions is distant, make a 'bridge' between those questions. Maintain a 'narrative' to your interview.

Don't be afraid to sound stupid, if you don't understand something, your audience probably won't either. Better you ask, then have a hole in your interview/story. By the same stroke though, don't be ignorant, be well researched on a topic before you go ahead with an interview.

Interview Questions to Avoid

Long-winded & confusing questions

- ✗ These generally resemble a list, e.g.
“What sort of music are you into – like pop, rock, jazz, classical, world, something else. . . what do you like most?”
- ✓ Try a simple question that will get more interesting information. “What music did you grow up listening to?”

Double Barrel questions

- ✗ “What do you like most about being in this new band and what do you miss about the old one?” The interviewee (guest) might only answer one part of the question and forget about the rest. What could happen is that the interviewee might ask you, the interviewer, what the question was. Then you will be on the spot!
- ✓ Again, think of breaking this into two parts.



Repeating what the guest has just said

- ✗ “So, you’ve just composed your first film score then?”
- ✓ Unnecessary. If you want to repeat a point, include it as part of your next question, e.g. How does someone who has just completed their first film score become recognized in the film industry?

Unfocussed questions

- ✗ “Now, tell me about yourself?” This is too broad, and it’s hard for the interviewee (especially someone who’s inexperienced). They might say “Well what do you want to know?”
- ✓ Give information about the guest in a scripted introduction first. This flatters them, and settles them in. It allows you to skip the slow “getting to know you” questions and jump straight into asking them your first meaty question!

Making noises

✖ e.g. “Yeah, aha, mmm, right, fantastic!” These are distracting to the guest and irritating to the listener. It can often mean the listener misses a word or two of the interviewees.

✓ When you’re doing a live/face-to-face interview, nod and use eye contact to show that you’ve understood. When you’re on the phone, you’ll have to bite your tongue!

Expressing your own opinion directly

✖ e.g. “Your new single is fantastic, much better than your last one... was that because you had a better producer this time round?”

✓ Better to ask, “How did working with a new producer affect your sound? ... OR “What did you do to develop your sound on the new album?”

Either/or questions

✖ “Are you going to launch a tour to promote this new EP or are you going straight into the studio to start recording your new album?”

Break it into 2 separate questions.

Uninformed statements

✖ These will expose your lack of research! e.g. “You’ve never been in the national top 10 before, have you? ... or have you?!”

✓ Research your guest beforehand!

And finally, one of the most important types of questions to avoid...

Closed questions

✖ These readily invite brief/abrupt yes or no answers, e.g. “Did you complete the jazz course last year?”

✓ To get more expansive responses, base questions on the 5W&H framework: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? e.g. “When did you finish the jazz course?” These are known as “Open Questions” and get much more interesting responses and detail.

ONLY use a closed question if you WANT a *yes* or *no* answer.

Challenge yourself!

Example Interview Brief

Note the following:

- All details are correctly filled out
- Back up numbers as well as suggested contact phone number
- Important information is in bold and phonetically spelled for easy reading
- Most questions are no more than one line in length

Topic	Art Deco in Adelaide
Interviewee	Paul Bynall, ADS Adelaide Chapter
Contact Number	(08) 8222 2222
Back up Numbers	0400 123 456
Introduction Bakelite (BAKER – LITE) and Bungalows are just some of the features of the houses of the Art Deco (DEH-KO) era... built between the 1920s and 1950s... but these houses are increasingly under threat from developers. Art Deco Adelaide is a new group aiming to increase education and appreciation for this great era... and joining us on the Bakelite phone this morning is Paul Bynall (BY-NORL). Paul, good morning...	
First question What characterises the Art Deco era?	
Lines of Enquiry (5-6) These houses were often built on fairly large blocks, does that make them a target for demolition? What suburbs are they most prominent in? What are some of the features that Art Deco house owners should aim to preserve? In your opinion, our houses built to last in the same way these days? What activities are is the Art Deco Society in Adelaide planning? How can we find out more information or become involved in the society?	

Back Announcement

PAUL BY-NALL from Art Deco Adelaide ... their website if you would like to know more can be found at community.livejournal.com/decoadelaide/

We look forward to hearing more about the society in the coming weeks on The Breakfast Show.

Notes Paul has agreed to an interview in 3 months time to check the progress of the society. (Make a note in the program diary)

Interview Brief Template:

Interview Style	
Location	
Topic	
Interviewee	
Contact Number	
Back up Number	
Introduction	
First question	
Lines of Enquiry (5-6)	
Notes	

This is an example of a Cue Sheet

Note:

- Layout is easy to read
- Key information in bold and CAPITALS
- All details have been filled in
- Includes notes

Item	The House that Jack (could afford) to Build		
Producer	Sarah Thomas		
Date produced	23.01.2008	Use by Date	30.1.08
File Name	Homecheaphome.wav	Duration	6.47
Introduction			
<p>The current housing situation in Australia has being labeled as a “crisis”... these days the old children’s nursery rhyme might read.... this is the country that put up the prices that decreased the opportunity to buy the house that Jack built! Australian houses are the <u>least</u> affordable in the world our cities are listed in the world’s top 50 worst housing markets. ... DR GARY GARNETT (GAR-NET)is an expert in housing and urban design from Francis University ... so Sarah Thomas asked him what housing affordability really means</p>			
Cue in	“well, I think that’s a very wide ranging..		
Cue out	...which we need to explore”		
Back announcement			
<p>DR. GARY GARNETT from Francis University speaking to our Sarah Thomas and sharing his idea that housing <u>affordability</u> really means housing <u>accessibility</u> for Australians.</p>			
Notes			
<p>Dr Garnett has given us permission to put a link to the study on our website.</p> <p>www.2008housingstudy.ufrancis.com.au</p>			

Cue Sheet Template:

Item			
Producer			
Date produced		Use by Date	
File Name		Duration	
Introduction			
Cue in			
Cue out			
Back announcement			

Notes

Conducting the Interview

Stay focused on what you want to get from the interview. The introduction should be just that; avoid long descriptive introductions. All the listeners need to know is the person's name and position why they are here and what they are going to talk about.

Questions should be as short as possible to give the respondent time to answer.

Question Delivery: should be clear, concise and sound interested

Remember a good interviewer must be a good listener.

If the talent prattles on, it is appropriate to move on as politely as you can. You might say something such as: "Fine but let me ask you this...". Try to draw out specifics: How long, how many, when, etc.?

Prepare your questions in advance in writing and bring them to the interview. Refer to them but don't show them to the interviewee, because it creates too formal an atmosphere.

Listen to answers: Follow up on interesting points. Ask other questions as they might arise, based on what the interviewee says or something new that might come to you on the spur of the moment.

Keep it Simple: don't let the interviewee generalise or use technical terms - make them explain, be attentive.

Keep your questions and comments at a level of broad comprehension (unless circumstances specifically require it).

Look interested to the interviewee: Don't murmur, instead use facial expressions and nod your head to encourage them to tell you more.

Last Question/ Closing. When you have covered the subject, finish the interview.

Use "Finally," or "It's been a pleasure talking to you..." to wrap it up.



Selecting a Location

Phone interviews

Phone interviews are convenient, save time and allow you to reach interviewees outside your location. Phone interviews can be conducted live to air or pre-recorded. When planning a phone interview, it is important to ensure you have the correct contact details, are aware of time differences and line quality.

Brief your talent on finding a quiet location where they will not be interrupted to do the phone interview. Using a landline is preferable as the line quality is generally better but using mobile and VOIP lines is sometimes the only option. In this case you may need to do a test call early on to ensure you get a good connection.

Always call your talent 10-15 minutes before the scheduled airtime to ensure you have them on the line for a live interview. If the connection is not good hang up and try again, or alternatively you may decide the interview is not for broadcast and just use the content for background research.

It is not a good idea to put an extended phone interview to air if the quality is bad, your listeners will likely tune out.

On Location

Recording an interview on location is a great option for collecting atmosphere and delivering a more real and interesting sound. In order to record on location, you need to ensure you have a reliable broadcast quality recording device, plenty of batteries, headphones and memory.

Choose a location that is free from noises that will interfere with your recording, i.e. loud computers, air-con, planes, trains and loud stage noise. Recording on location also means your talent will be within their comfort zone and less nervous, meaning your interview will sound natural and relaxed.

Be aware of your seating arrangements so you can maintain eye contact but also monitor your recorder. Sitting at an angle or opposite your talent will encourage a more natural conversation. Experiment with the best place to position the recording device and microphone and always wear headphones to monitor the ambient noise.

Brief your talent so they understand that you will occasionally check the recording device throughout the interview, and they should continue talking. Collect some extra ambient sound to assist you with editing when doing a pre-recorded interview.



In the studio

Many interviewees on community radio will not have been in a studio environment before so it is important to make them feel comfortable. Ask the talent to come a few minutes before the scheduled interview time so you can show them around and introduce them to the studio environment.

If you have headphones for your guest this helps them immerse into the on-air mode. Otherwise, explain the studio set-up and what you will be doing during the interview (panelling/cueing tracks etc) so they are not thrown off.

Seat the guest in a position where you can maintain eye contact and position their mic so you can get a good level. Remember to brief them on speaking right into the mic, not turning their head or touching the mic stand. Make sure you cue them to get the right level. You may also like to explain some simple hand signals.

Make sure you have an introduction prepared. This lets the guest know they are about to be on air and cues the listener in.

A simple introduction should contain these elements;

1. Introduce the topic-spark your listener's interest with a creative introduction that makes the topic relevant and timely
2. Explain the background to the topic- give some detail about the subject but be clear and concise and save the real meat for the interview
3. Introduce the guest- always finish with the guest's name and title so the listener has it fresh in their memory

Technical Considerations

- Check your equipment before you begin and if you are going into the field, check the equipment before you leave the station
- Make sure you know how to use the equipment BEFORE you start the interview
- Have spare batteries- use power where possible
- Do a test recording and record some atmosphere & test the levels
- Check the mic pick-up pattern and position it accordingly and check for lead crackle
- Begin the interview with an identification, ask the interviewee to identify themselves
- Check the interview when you are finished
- ALWAYS WEAR HEADPHONES

Using a portable recorder

There are a wide range of portable recorders you can use for recording interviews on location. You may even be able to get a good quality recording using a mobile phone.

Generally, a plug-in mic delivers better quality than a built-in mic as you have more control over its positioning. Also, it's recommended to experiment with the technology, as you have the upper hand to see what kind of recordings you can achieve.



Here are some general guidelines on using portable equipment:

1. Check that the kit includes the following:

Recorder

Microphone and lead

Headphones

Batteries/power source

2. To record

Make sure there is sufficient battery power

Plug the microphone into the mic jack

To prepare for recording press the 'rec', this usually puts the device in rec/pause mode

While the device is rec/pause mode check levels and adjust accordingly using the level buttons or repositioning the mic or device

When ready press the rec/pause button and ensure the unit is recording by looking at the level indicator & time counter

When you have finished recording hit the pause or stop button

4. When finished

Switch off mic (if needed) and unplug mic

Hit stop on the recorder to save your recording

Listen back to your recording

5. Pack up

Transfer your recording to a computer or other playback/editing device

Interview Preparation- Checklist

Choosing your topic:

- ☐ Consider your target audience
- ☐ Research your topic
- ☐ Develop an angle / approach
- ☐ Draft a list of key points

Preparation:

- ☐ Contact your potential interviewee & have a chat
- ☐ Check that they're a good speaker and the right person to interview
- ☐ Refine your interview angle based on what you learn from the chat
- ☐ Brief your interviewee on what to expect:
 - ☐ purpose of interview
 - ☐ duration
 - ☐ location
 - ☐ audience
 - ☐ time and date
 - ☐ key points for discussion
 - ☐ never hand over a list of exact Qs
- ☐ Book recording equipment & or studio
- ☐ Draft an interview brief (introduction, 1st question, list of bullet points or subsequent questions & back announcement)
- ☐ Check they are in logical sequence
- ☐ Consider how the interview should end.
- ☐ Check recording equipment before the interview

During the interview:

- ☐ Ask them to state their name and position for the record so you get the pronunciation correct
- ☐ Listen!
- ☐ Respond with natural questions
- ☐ Keep quiet while the interviewee is talking

- ☐ Keep an eye on the levels
- ☐ Keep focussed
- ☐ Keep to time
- ☐ Look for a good out point
- ☐ Wrap it up
- ☐ Thank your guest

After a pre-recorded interview:

- ☐ Save your interview file immediately.
- ☐ Check that interview recorded correctly – repeat if necessary
- ☐ Edit for a natural / smooth sound
- ☐ Note the duration, first and last words
- ☐ Change the scripted intro if necessary
- ☐ Complete a cue sheet or brief the program presenter who will air your interview.

Good Interviewing Checklist

Listen to a range of interviews and use this checklist to decide if the interviewer does the following:

INTRODUCTION

- ☐ Does it catch the listeners' attention?
- ☐ Does it sound scripted?
- ☐ Does it introduce the topic clearly?
- ☐ Does it introduce the speaker clearly?

BEGINNING

- ☐ Does it get straight to the point?
- ☐ Are there "settling down" questions?

MIDDLE

- ☐ Ask one question at a time?
- ☐ Are the key issues or focus of the interview identified?
- ☐ Following through on the introduction?
- ☐ Listener friendly?

- ☐ Is there rapport with the speaker?
- ☐ Control without domination?
- ☐ Are there “unasked questions” for you?
- ☐ Is there a reminder during the interview of the guest’s name?

ENDING

- ☐ Not too sudden or abrupt?
- ☐ Not too long or too short?
- ☐ Ended on a strong note?
- ☐ Back announced with details and summary?

Interview Feedback Sheet

Interviewer:	Date:
Topic:	
What did you enjoy about the interview?	
Were there any questions you think should have been asked differently?	
<i>(Write the question as you would have asked it)</i>	
How was the interaction between the speakers? Was there energy in it? <i>(Listen to voices as much as words)</i>	
Was there anything you think may have breached broadcast laws or regulations?	

<p>Comment on the length of the interview? <i>(Should it have been further edited, expanded on questions, did you lose interest at any point?)</i></p>	
<p>Any suggestions to improve the interview?</p>	