

How to Plan and Conduct an Interview

Interviewing involves two types of skills. The first is questioning skills. By asking the right types of questions in the right sequence, you can get more complete information from informants than without these techniques. The other is rapport-building skills. These skills help you build rapport with your informants so that people may trust you and freely give you information. As an interviewer, you should convey confidence when you ask for an appointment and when you conduct the interview. You should strive for a conversational and friendly tone. Planning for an interview will help give you confidence.

Before the Interview

Know your purpose. Concretely state the type of information you hope to get by the end of the interview. Know what types of things you need to ask so informants reveal the desired information. Present these topics as questions. When writing question, focus on "open" questions. Prepare a script to follow that explains the following:

1. The interviewer's name, course name (class you are taking), responsibility
2. The new course (and objectives) that are the subject of the interview
3. Why you are conducting the interview and how the results will be used
4. How long you expect to take to complete the interview

Tips for Conducting the Interview

Take notes on only one side of the paper. Start a new page each time subject starts a new subject (for open ended questions). If possible, take a tape recorder so that you are free to listen attentively and watch nonverbal indications.

Do not be afraid to say, "I don't understand what you mean." "Give me an example of ...", or "What do you mean ...". Volunteer a summary of what you think your informant has said and ask for verification.

Specific things to ALWAYS DO, if possible:

1. Study the questions to be asked before beginning the interview.
2. Be polite - act naturally.
3. Complete the interview at one sitting.
4. Use an introduction and explanation of purpose.
5. Write the answers legibly on your form.
6. Record every answer in the correct place.
7. Repeat the question if needed.
8. Accept a refusal graciously if the teacher can't work on this project with you. Consider someone else and schedule another interview.
9. Check the interview form before closing the interview to see that all answers are legible and complete.

Specific things to NEVER DO:

1. Avoid using questions of more than fourteen words. Long complicated questions are hard to follow and respond to.
2. Do not interrupt.
3. Do not leave with unanswered questions in your mind.