

Yearbook Interviewing

A reporter who is prepared for an interview is taken more seriously and the interview itself goes more smoothly. Stories that include quotes from multiple sources and interesting details make for more appealing and legitimate copy. A good reporter gathers the facts, conducts numerous interviews and writes colorful descriptions.

Collecting and Organizing Information

Every story should include information from at least three interviews. Not everyone interviewed will provide quotable statements, so the more people contacted, the better. Work to get as many quotes from different people included in the book. Yearbooks should be full of names. Consider keeping a list of people already quoted so that the same people aren't quoted repeatedly.

Gather background information about the topic before doing an interview. Research can be conducted using a variety of sources, including old yearbooks, school guidebooks, the Internet and newspapers. Reporters should not expect the interviewee to provide all the information for the story. The more prepared you are, the better the questions will be, and therefore, the more interesting the quotes.

Before the Interview

1. Determine who would be the best person or people to interview for the topic. Interview people who would provide a new perspective on the topic.
2. Get information about the person or topic you are going to interview—who, why, what, where, when, how.
3. Learn information that is already known and determine what people would want to know more about.
4. Research the latest information about the topic.
5. Make an appointment for the interview.
6. Conduct the interview face-to-face so you can comment on non-verbal gestures as well as follow-up questions.
7. Let the interviewee know the subject of the interview so the person can come prepared with any additional relevant information.
8. The first set of questions should be easy to allow you and the interviewee to become comfortable with each other. This is a good time to clarify names, dates and places.
9. The next set of questions should take you back to the moment. They should not be yes or no questions. They should be open-ended and may start with, "Tell me about..."
10. Prepare for a conversation, not a firing squad of questions.

Yearbook Interviewing, continued

During the Interview

1. Dress appropriately for the person you are interviewing.
2. Thank the interviewee for his or her time.
3. Gather facts, non-verbal details and quotes.
4. If you are trying to quote and the response was too fast, ask for a moment to get all of the information down.
5. Ask follow-up questions like, "Tell me more about..." and "Why did you say...?"
6. Take note of non-verbal gestures throughout the conversation (shrugs, smiles, etc.).
7. Mark important information as you gather it so that it stands out when you go over your notes.
8. Keep the interview length to your specified time.
9. When finished, thank him or her for the time again and leave the door open for a quick follow-up phone call.

After the Interview

1. Begin your writing process as soon after the interview as you can.
2. Rewrite or type your notes so that they are organized and easily understood.
3. Confirm information previously gathered.
4. Eliminate any opinions and adjectives and only record the facts about the non-verbal gestures.
5. Jot down any follow-up questions you have.
6. Save everything.
 - Have every quote signed as being what the person said.
 - Save your notes.
 - Save your drafts.
 - Place all of this and a copy of the final spread in a manila envelope.
 - Keep in a file drawer so the staff has it if a question comes up.
 - Save it for months after the yearbook has been distributed, and longer if you can.

Types of Interviewing Questions

Close-ended questions

Example: "Have you enjoyed being in band?"

- Can be used to gather basic facts
- Can be answered with one or two words, or yes/no
- Does not spark a conversation alone
- Should be followed by an open-ended question
- Can be leading

Open-ended questions

- Example: "What have you most enjoyed about being in the band? Why?"
- Can't be answered with a yes or no or a single word
- Asks the interviewee to think about the topic or event
- May have different responses, depending on who is answering the questions
- Invites the interviewees to tell the story in their own words
- Allows respondents to tell their stories by not leading them into the answers you want to hear

