

How to: INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a required component of your research for the history fair project. It is quite likely that interviews will be the highlight of your research experience. At the same, time interviews can be the most stressful part of your research. Following is some information that can increase the likelihood of your interviews being exciting fascinating experiences with minimum stress. Believe it or not, witnesses and experts love to share their experiences and expertise with young people interested to listen.

What is an INTERVIEW?

An interview is a conversation between a researcher and a source. It is live and interactive. There are 3 types of interviews acceptable for this project:

1. Personal Interview: The best way to conduct interviews is face to face which allows the interview to be more conversational.
2. Telephone Interview: Pretty good in that they allow for real-time interaction but are less personal than face to face.
3. Email Interview: The weakest type of interview is the email interview where the researcher sends questions or prompts to the interviewee via email. The interviewee then responds to the questions/prompts via email. In theory, the interaction can continue via email but because of the nature of email, almost all the spontaneity and conversational nature of the interaction is lost. *You should conduct email interviews only as a last resort if great source cannot be contacted in a more personal way.*

Whom to INTERVIEW?

Your goal is to interview the BEST sources on your topic:

- Primary Sources = Directly witnessed/participated in the events related to the topic
- Secondary Sources = Professional Experts on the topic

How to get INTERVIEWS?

Getting interviews can be rather uncomfortable and stressful because it means the researcher has to reach out to a stranger.

Step 1: Figuring out whom you want to interview.

Create a list of possible interviewees with a note on why you'd want to interview him/her and contact information. See below.

Interviewee	Reason to Interview	Contact Information

Reasons to Interview—the interviewee can help you better understand your topic and fill in gaps in your argument. You shouldn't seek to interview someone simply because s/he is an expert. Rather, what is it about his/her expertise would be helpful to you as you develop your argument.

How to Get Contact Info—Start with relevant websites, personal contacts and email addresses from your web and print sources.

Step 2: Reaching out to potential Interviewees.

- ❑ **Be Courteous!**
- ❑ Whenever possible, contact by telephone (emails are easy to ignore).

Step 3: Great, you've got them on the phone... now what?

1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. "Good afternoon, my name is (insert your name here). I am a junior at Bedford High School and I am doing a research project on (insert your topic here)."
2. Indicate your interest in them. E.g. "Through our research we learned that you are an expert on (topic)."
3. Ask to schedule an interview, "Is there a time that would be convenient for you to have a 15-30 minute conversation?"

How to conduct INTERVIEWS?

- ❑ Be courteous and respectful
 - ❑ Be grateful for their time.
 - ❑ Ask their permission to record (audio or video).
 - ❑ Follow up with a thank you note.
- ❑ Be enthusiastic
- ❑ Be prepared.
 - ❑ Have a scripted list of questions (potential follow up questions).
 - i. Final Question: What other sources do you recommend I consult?
 - ❑ Be familiar with their work and your own topic.