

## Conducting the interview

**It** might sound easy to have an interview with a person willing to give their opinion or to answer questions about a particular topic. But there are several techniques which you need to learn in order to conduct a good interview.

**The first part of your exercise is to find a topic.** Your group can decide to ask people at LS about their opinions about a number of issues, such as what they think of MCAS tests or who would be the best president. OR you can find a teacher, staff member or student to interview about something which they are knowledgeable about. LS students have done great interviews with teachers about their classrooms, like Mr. Dankoís animals in science class, or a history teacher talking about land development in Sudbury. If you wish to ask people **opinion** questions, try to find something that people will find interesting, and might have some passion about. In other words kids might be a lot more interested in talking about curfews than they would about who they want to be president. Topical opinion questions are also known as “on the street interviews” because typically they are questions asked people in public places such as a busy street or grocery store.

Have a discussion with your group and decide upon your topic. Then write a sentence or two about it here: This should take no more than ten minutes.

**The second part of the exercise is to develop a question and line of questioning.** By this we mean the first question should elicit more than a “yes”, “no”, or one word response. The question should somehow trigger an answer which comes in a sentence or more. So when you ask someone who they are voting for, they will answer “Bush” or “Gore” which really doesn’t tell us much. But if you ask who are you voting for and **why**, you can see that you will get a more detailed response. People have a lot of interesting things to say but you need to **draw them out, get them to talk and feel comfortable expressing their opinions.** Some people are more articulate than others but you can help any interviewee by asking follow up questions. You need to be a good listener when they are talking with you so that you **can take a part of their answer to use in framing your next question.** For example you can ask as a follow up question: “You say that you like Mr. Bush’s plan for education, can you tell us why?”

Additionally make **eye contact** with who you are speaking with even if it’s for radio. When we get into video interview techniques in a later exercise you’ll see why this is important. In radio, or in any conversation, it is not only polite to make eye contact, it is necessary for your focus.

You need to pay attention and let the person you speak with know you are paying attention. Eye contact and occasional nodding are your cues which communicate that you are interested in what they are saying.

We want to build towards an interview technique which helps people answer questions in a conversational manner. It makes the subject relaxed and a more interesting and easy to listen to interview.

**Ethics and etiquette:** Another important thing with radio and television interviewing is common courtesy and decency. You don't just walk up to someone and stick a microphone in their face and start firing questions off. Get their permission and consent first. Some people don't like to be interviewed period, others may be having a bad day, or be too busy at the moment. For the longer interview you want to set an appointment in advance. For the "on the street" interview you want to be well planned ahead of time. In both cases you want to have a calm approach and not be rushed. You want to ask your questions clearly, don't mumble and don't talk too fast or slowly. Have a conversational and friendly tone yourself so that you get the same from who you are speaking with.

Use the remaining space on this paper to work out a series of questions about your topic...PLAN either an audio tape up to ten minutes long which is either an interview with one person or with several. Work out the questions and follow-ups. Then take a few minutes practicing on each other and then switch roles so that you can see what it's like to be interviewed and to interview someone else. Once you have satisfied the teacher that you are ready you can go and finish this project.

grading rubric:

|                    | mastery 3   | satisfactory 2  | sub standard 1  |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| topic              | you have chosen a topic that is viable and appropriate<br><br>3 x 8 = 24  | your topic may not be appropriate or viable<br><br>2 x 8 = 16   | inappropriate AND not viable<br><br>1 x 15 = 15   |
| questions          | developed a clear line of questioning that elicits articulate responses and follow-up questions<br><br>3 x 8 = 24   | questions are skimpy; won't elicit much by way of follow up or articulate responses<br><br>2 x 8 = 16         | questions are very simplified and cannot elicit much, if any, response<br><br>1 x 15 = 15 |
| ethics             | you gained permission to conduct the interview and were courteous and professional<br><br>3 x 8 = 24                | conducted a hurried interview; not clear if ethics were followed or permission was explicit<br><br>2 x 8 = 16 | used the interview to ambush, embarrass, or humiliate<br><br>1 x 15 = 15                  |
| production content | finished product is concise, interesting, holds up well--people want to listen to the whole thing<br><br>3 x 9 = 27 | somewhat boring; listeners want to switch over to something else<br><br>2 x 9 = 18                            | devoid of structure and content as to make no sense; not interesting<br><br>1 x 10 = 10   |

**NOTE: Unlike our first exercise, this is a serious project. Any frivolous or offensive projects will be graded with a zero. Ask the teacher for approval first. You are doing this project for a grade.**