



5 Interviews

Exercise 1: Interviews

Section I: Discussion Questions

1. How would you respond to a source who, several days before a scheduled interview, asked for a list of the questions you intended to ask?
2. Do you agree that reporters have an obligation to inform their sources when they plan to record an interview even when it's legal to do so? Why or why not?
3. If a story's publication is likely to embarrass a source, do reporters have a responsibility to warn the source of that possibility? Does it matter whether the source is used to dealing with reporters?
4. Would you be willing to interview a mother whose son just died? Would it matter whether her son drowned in a swimming pool, was murdered, or was a convicted killer executed in a state prison?
5. Imagine that you wrote a front-page story about students' use of marijuana on your campus. To obtain the story, you promised several sources that you would never reveal their identities. If, during a subsequent legal proceeding, a judge ordered you to identify your sources, would you do so? Or would you be willing to go to jail to protect your sources?

Section II: Class Projects

1. List 10 interviewing tips provided by other sources.

2. Interview an expert on body language or nonverbal communication, perhaps someone in your school's psychology or speech department, and report on the information's usefulness to journalists. You might also invite the expert to speak to your class.
3. Interview an expert on interviewing, perhaps a faculty member in your school's psychology department. You might also invite the expert to speak to your class.
4. Interview government officials who frequently deal with reporters. Ask those officials what they like and dislike about the interviews and how they try to handle the interviews and the reporters conducting the interviews.
5. Ask several government officials which local reporters are the best interviewers, then interview those reporters about their interviewing techniques. You might invite one of those reporters to speak to your class.
6. Ask every student in your class to write one paragraph about each of the three most newsworthy experiences in his or her life. Then select the students with the most interesting experiences and have each student in your class interview them, one by one, and write news stories about their experiences.

Exercise 2: Interview with an Injured Bicyclist

Write a news story based on the following interview with Marsha L. Taylor, conducted this morning, two days after she was released from a hospital after being injured in a bicycling accident. "Q" stands for the questions that Taylor was asked during the interview at her home, and "A" stands for her answers, which can be quoted directly. Taylor manages a McDonald's restaurant and lives on McKay Boulevard in your city.

Q: How long have you been bicycling?

A: I started when I was in college, but I didn't do any serious cycling until after I had graduated. I spent that first summer looking for work, and cycling was a way of filling in time and keeping fit while I waited for interviews. Eventually I got involved with some groups of cyclists and participating in weekend rides and even some races. Since then it's been a major part of my life. I can't imagine what my life would be like without bicycling.

Q: How active have you been in bicycling recently?

A: I rode a lot this year. Um, I guess I must have ridden at least maybe 5,000 kilometres, because in the spring I rode in the annual Lieutenant-Governor's Bicycle Tour, which goes across the province. And in the fall, I rode in a tour across Canada.

Q: How did your accident happen?

A: Well, a lot of it is hazy to me, but it happened shortly after I finished the tour. I had been back in town about two weeks, and I was just out for a short ride of an hour or so. I was riding down 72nd Street almost to Southland Boulevard when a car hit me from behind and sent me flying off my bike. That's all I remember until I was in the hospital.

Q: What were your injuries?

A: Gee, you might as well ask what wasn't injured. I had a mild concussion, a broken neck, six broken ribs, a broken arm, and a broken pelvis.

Q: Were the doctors worried about your condition?

A: Yeah, somewhat. They didn't think there was anything they couldn't control, but there was a lot of stuff broken. They were especially concerned about the broken neck. One doctor said I had what they call a hangman's fracture. She said it was a miracle that I wasn't paralyzed.

Q: Was your recovery pretty smooth?

A: No. In fact I got worse at first. After a couple of weeks, they sent me to a rehabilitation facility, but then I developed complications. The doctors discovered I had some internal injuries. My intestine was perforated, and my liver and gall bladder were injured. All that caused my skin to change colour, start turning bright orange. When my mother saw me she said I looked like a Halloween pumpkin. I had to go back to the hospital because of those complications. But for that, I probably would have been out in two months instead of four. I still have to go back for rehabilitation three times a week.

Q: Have you changed your attitude about cycling since your accident?

A: No. I still want to ride. If I could, I'd be out there right now, but it's hard to ride a bike when you have to use crutches. If you, you know, take precautions and are careful, bicycling's pretty safe.

Q: What kind of precautions?

A: Well, the main thing, you know, is protective clothing, especially the helmet. I never ride unless I have my helmet. It probably saved my life this time.

Q: How long have you lived here?

A: Let's see, ah, 15 years now, ever since I started work for McDonald's.

Q: How long have you been manager there?

A: Four years.

Q: How old are you?

A: Ah, 37. Old enough, yeah.

Exercise 3: Interview with a Robbery Victim

Write a news story based on the following interview with Michele Schipper, a second-year student majoring in journalism at your school. The interview provides a verbatim account of a robbery that occurred yesterday. "Q" stands for the questions Ms. Schipper was asked during an interview this morning, and "A" stands for her answers, which can be quoted directly. (This is a true story, told by a student.)

Q: Could you describe the robbery?

A: I pulled up into the parking lot of a convenience store on Bonneville Drive, but I pulled up on the side and not in front where I should have, and I was getting out of my car, and I was

reaching into my car to pull out my purse when this guy, 6-foot-tall or whatever, approached me and said, "Give me your purse." I said, "OK." I barely saw him out of the corner of my eye. And then, I, um, so I reached in to get my purse. And I could see him approaching a little closer. Before then, he was 4 or 5 feet away. So I turned around and kicked him in the groin area, and he started going down, but I was afraid he wouldn't stay down, that he would seek some kind of retribution. So when he was down, I gave him a roundhouse to the nose. I just hit him as hard as I could, an undercut as hard as I could. And I could hear some crunching, and some blood spurted, and he went on the ground, and I got in my car, and I went away. I called the cops from a motel down the street. They asked where he was last I seen him, and I said, "On the ground."

Q: Did the police find him?

A: No, he was gone.

Q: Had you taken judo or some type of self-defence course?

A: No, but I used to be a tomboy, and I used to wrestle with the guys, my good friends, when I was young. It was a good punch. I don't know, I was just very mad. My dad, he works out with boxing and weightlifting and everything, and I've played with that, so I've got the power.

Q: Could you describe the man?

A: I didn't see him well enough to identify him, really, but I hope he thinks twice next time.

Q: What time did the robbery occur?

A: This was about 4 in the afternoon, broad daylight, but there were no other cars parked around, though.

Q: Did you see the man when you drove up, or was he hiding?

A: There was a dumpster, and I guess he came from behind the dumpster, like he was waiting there, just like he was waiting there. And I guess he was waiting around the dumpster, because no one was standing around when I pulled up, I remember that.

Q: Were there any witnesses who could describe the man?

A: There was no one around, there were no cars parked. The clerks were inside the store. I didn't see any pedestrians around, and after I did it, I didn't wait to find if there were any witnesses because I wanted to leave right away.

Q: Was the man armed?

A: Out of the corner of my eye I realized I didn't see any weapon. And I guess I thought he was alone. You register some things; you just don't consciously realize it.

Q: What was your first reaction, what did you think when he first approached and demanded your purse?

A: I didn't think of anything, really, you know. I just reacted. I was very, really indignant. Why, you know, just because he wanted my purse, why should he have it? There was really only \$10 in there, and I probably wouldn't really do it again in the same situation. And my parents don't know about it because they would be very angry that I fought back.

Q: Had you ever thought about being robbed and about what you would do, about how you would respond?

A: It just came instinctively, and after the incident, you know, I was shaking for about an hour afterwards.

Q: About how long did the robbery last?

A: It really only lasted a second, just as long as it would take for you to kick someone and then to hit them and then drive away in the car. It really only lasted a second.