



# ORGANIZING AN INTERVIEW

USING PRIMARY SOURCES IN  
RESEARCH PAPERS



## Yo, I'm Jill!

I live on macha green tea lattes + nerdy lesson planning sessions.

I'm on a mission to flip the script on how we teach today's writers, so...

I provide secondary ELA teachers with the **resources + mindset** they need to make the **writing process** more **relevant + applicable** for today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.

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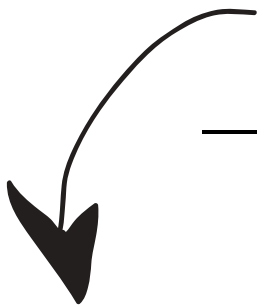
# ORGANIZING AN INTERVIEW:



## USING PRIMARY SOURCES IN RESEARCH PAPERS

Student Name:

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Research Topic:

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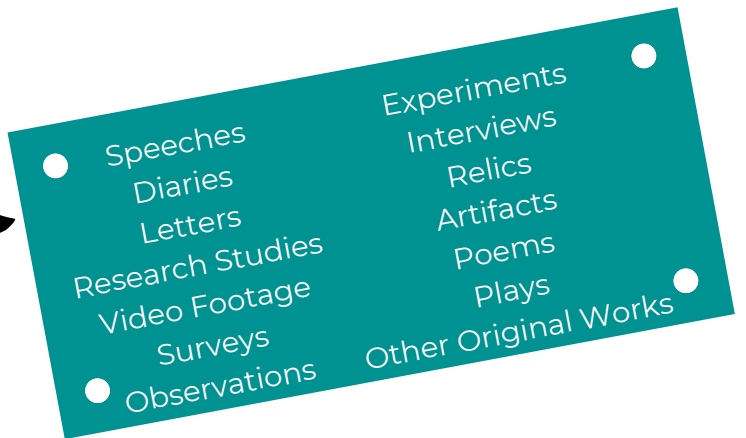
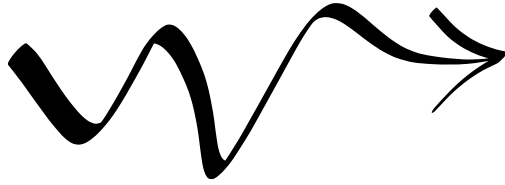
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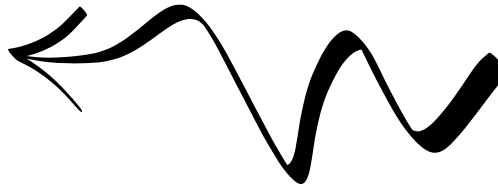
# VOCABULARY

## PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

**PRIMARY SOURCES:**  
Original documents and/or direct conversation



**SECONDARY SOURCES:**  
Interpretations and analyses of primary sources. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes, or graphics of primary sources in them.



## QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE DATA

### QUALITATIVE (QUALITY) RESEARCH

Is more focused on how people feel, what they think, and why they make certain choices; more subjective in nature.

Requires field of research, where the researcher conducts an interview, observes, or creates a focus group to draw/gather information.

*Feelings*

### QUANTITATIVE (QUANTITY) RESEARCH

Is a more logical and data-led approach which provides a measure of what people think from a statistical and numerical point of view; more objective in nature.

May involve surveys, experiments, and other data-collection methods

*Data*

# INTERVIEWING

*An interview is a one-on-one directed conversation with an individual using a series of questions designed to elicit extended responses.*

*Because this method allows you to probe for greater depth or explanation, simple yes/no questions, or fixed-response questions are typically not used.*

*Interviews allow participants to express their thoughts using their own words and organization and thus are particularly valuable for gaining insight.*



## A FEW GOOD REASONS FOR INTERVIEWING

- Gaining insight into attitudes and perceptions
- Acquiring in-depth information
- Exploring individual differences in experiences and outcomes



## WHO CAN YOU INTERVIEW?

Determining who to interview can be really difficult, and sometimes, even when you have a great idea, the subject of your interview is unavailable. Therefore, coming up with several interview subjects is often the best answer.

To determine the best people to interview, spend some time thinking about who the stakeholders are related to your subject matter.



**Stakeholder:** (n). a person, group, or organization that has interest or concern in a particular matter or issue; has something at stake, or at risk if the issue works in their favor or not.

Take a look at your research topic/question and ask yourself, WHO are the voices worth listening to in this argument/debate/conversation? Who are the experts that know about it? Whose point of view matters in determining the answer to the question? Who has had an experience related to this topic?



# INTERVIEWING

## WRITING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Draft OPEN-ENDED questions that will encourage the person you're interviewing to elaborate.

**Discourages Elaboration:** "Did you register for the program to increase your knowledge in the field?"

**Encourages Elaboration:** "Please tell me how you got interested in this program."

2. AVOID BIASED QUESTIONS that may 'lead' the person responding to answer in a certain way. While a leading question may result in the answer you 'want,' it won't necessarily give you the researched response you NEED, and this will in turn risk your credibility as a writer.

If you ask a **leading question**, participants are more likely to provide a response that accords to you simply because they don't want to contradict the interviewer.

BUT...what purpose does this truly serve?

To avoid this fabricated situation, ask **neutral** questions that are free of misconceptions or bias.

**Biased:** "This semester you were introduced to some amazing, state-of-the-art technology through the FAST Tax Program. What is your opinion of the program?"

**Better:** "What is your opinion of the FAST Tax program?"

3. Draft CLEAR, STRAIGHTFORWARD QUESTIONS that the person responding can understand. If your question addresses more than one concept at a time, it may confuse the participant, leading them to answer only one part of the question or neither. The solution is to separate two ideas into two questions.

**Double-barreled:** "How did using Blackboard and the Classroom Performance System help you learn the material in this course?"

**Better:** "How did using Blackboard help you learn the material in this course?"

"How did using the Classroom Performance System help you learn the material in this course?"

4. AVOID overly BROAD questions: Target specific ideas that your paper has yet to address.

**Too Broad:** "Why do you think the college diploma is valuable?"

**Focused/Targeted:** "Who benefits most from the college diploma?"

**Follow-up Question:** "Why do you think this?"

5. Don't be afraid to PROBE participants further by asking FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS. This will help you delve deeper into the topic! QUALITY over QUANTITY!!

# INTERVIEWING

## WRITING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### *Important tips when PREPARING for your interview:*

- REVIEW** your research prior to the interview. An effective interviewer knows the material well, so they can have a genuine dialogue about it with the person being interviewed.
- Organize** your paperwork. Have your research with you in case you need to refer to it quickly; have an Interview Question Sheet typed up to record notes on. Under no circumstances should you be wasting time shuffling papers during the interview.
- Practice** your questions on someone the night before to see how they respond. This will give you practice at developing follow-up questions, which will strengthen interview output.
- Plan** how you will take notes. Ask the interviewer if you can record the conversation if using a recording device is an option. If not, make a plan for how you will quickly write concise notes during the conversation.

### *Important tips when CONDUCTING your interview:*

- Graciously introduce yourself and thank the participant for taking the time out of their day to speak with you.
- Briefly explain the purpose of the interview and how the information gathered from it will be used.
- Clarify time limitations to ensure that all participants are aware.
- Kindly ask permission to email follow-up questions to the participant (if necessary) once the interview is complete; obtain proper contact information and ask what days/times are best for follow-up contact.
- Though you have a set of questions to ask, allow the conversations to develop as naturally as possible without going off-task. Think about the quality of the output you are getting from an in-depth conversation, as opposed to firing off a large quantity of questions that barely etch the surface in detail.
- PROBE FURTHER...**Don't assume that you understand the intent of a brief response! So what, if you feel silly asking a follow-up question? You are doing it in the name of **RESEARCH!** Use probes to confirm understanding or to prompt further explanation.

### *Important tips FOLLOWING your interview:*

- Take time to once again THANK the person you are interviewing for their willingness and commitment to help you learn from an expert.
- Be sure you gather contact information (at the consent of your source) for follow-up purposes.
- Expand your notes as soon as possible after each interview, preferably within 24 hours, while your memory is still fresh
  - Expand shorthand and abbreviations into full-blown notes before you forget what you originally meant!
  - The sooner you review your notes, the more likely you are to remember things you didn't get a chance to write down.
  - Transcribe audio recordings, and prepare follow-up questions to clarify meaning.
- Are there any holes left over in your research? Prepare a set of follow-up questions for email as necessary.

# INTERVIEWING

## Interview Question Stems

- **While Introducing Yourself:**
  - "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a student in Mrs./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s class.
  - Since we will be discussing \_\_\_\_\_ today, could you please provide me with your name, title, and any credentials that will help me verify your expertise in this field."
- **General Question Stems:**
  - "How do you feel about..."
  - "Can you please elaborate on..."
  - "How would you respond to..."
  - "What position do you take on..."
  - "Tell me about your experience with..."
- **When You Need to Clarify Something They Said:**
  - "I apologize, could you please repeat that? I want to make sure I copy your thoughts into my notes correctly."
  - "Would you mind clarifying what you meant when you said..."
  - "To help me understand, could you provide an example of..."
  - "What do you mean when you say..."
  - "You said \_\_\_\_\_. How would you define that term?"
- **Deepening Understanding/Filling in Any Holes:**
  - "In my writing/blog/podcast/documentary, I'm trying to prove that...As an expert in the field, what might you add to this claim?"
  - "In my writing/blog/podcast/documentary, I'm trying to refute that...As an expert in the field, how would you counter this claim?"

## MAKING INITIAL CONTACT

### Indicate Who You Are:

- Name
- Grade
- Course

### Indicate Your Purpose for Interviewing:

- Talk about the goal of the course, assignment, and/or project.
- Mention your research focus!
- Indicate why the expertise of THIS individual will help your cause.
- What do you hope to gain from the interview?

### Tone:

- Professional
- Courteous/Gracious
- Appreciative of their time

### Call to Action:

- Tell them what to do next.
  - Please respond to let me know you received this email.
  - Please call me to set up a time and date for the interview.
- Provide questions they can answer as part of their response.
  - When are they available?
  - Would they mind an in-person interview?
  - How much time can they give you?