

Interviewing and Quotes

A large part of a journalist's job is interviewing sources for their article. Today we will look at interviewing skills and how to add quotes to our writing.

Why do you think interviews are important in news reporting? What should a journalist do to prepare for an interview?



Interviewing

Interviewing is the heart and soul of reporting. An interview is a formal conversation between a reporter and a source. If a reporter cannot interview effectively, the finished product lacks the human element, the quotations and personal interpretations that bring news stories and features alive in readers' minds. People like to hear and read what authorities have to say, and they like to know people's reactions to issues and situations. Reporters get information from authorities and learn people reactions by interviewing.

Without interviews, a reporter's only sources would be physical ones such as books, maps, news releases. News need a human element, a real-life perspective achieved by using quotes from people acting as sources of information.

Using Quotes

There are two types of quotes that journalists use: Direct Quotes and Indirect Quotes.

Direct quotes are when you're directly quoting what someone said—word-for-word, not paraphrasing. You put direct quotations in quotation marks.

So if you were hanging out with Squiggly in Ghirardelli Square, and you asked him if he wanted some chocolate covered cashews, and he looked at you with big eyes and simply said, “Yes!” you could later report that Squiggly said, “Yes,” and you'd put that in quotation marks since that's exactly what he said.

Using Quotes

Indirect quote is when you're reporting what someone said, but not exactly. You're paraphrasing, and you don't need to put indirect quotations in quotation marks.

Let's imagine again that you were hanging out with Squiggly in Ghirardelli Square, but this time when you asked him if he wanted some chocolate covered cashews, he said, "Oh my gosh, you can't imagine how much I want chocolate covered cashews. I was just looking at them and drooling. Thank you!"

You might report that you offered Squiggly chocolate covered cashews and he said yes, but this time you wouldn't put "yes" in quotation marks because Squiggly didn't actually say the word "yes." You're just paraphrasing his dramatically positive response.

Apply Direct and Indirect Quotes

Read the article on former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. In groups (2-3 people MAXIMUM!) find as many quotes as you can. Identify them as either Direct Quotes or Indirect Quotes.



Reverse Interview

Now that you have identified all the quotes (both direct and indirect), we are going to conduct a “reverse interview”.

Look at the quotes and try to come up with the question you believe the journalist asked to get that response from their source.

Ex: “It’ll be a wonderful fun for a time for his team -- it will be like Christmas,” said Chest Finn, a former Department of Education official [...] “But the thing about discretionary spending is that it makes more people angry than it makes happy.”

EXIT TICKET

Brainstorm a list of people you think would be interesting to interview for an article. Your next assignment will be to write a profile feature.

Try to think of at least 4-5 people you could interview for this profile feature.

