

## SOUNDBITES ACTIVITY #5

# INTERVIEWING

# RECORDING YOUR FIRST INTERVIEW

## SET-UP:

**GUIDING QUESTION:** How do you complete an audio interview from start to finish?

## TOOLS:

- Something to write with and something to write on
- A partner, ideally someone in your household
- A digital recording device, like a smartphone
- A digital recording app (like Voice Memos on an iPhone, Virtual Recorder on an Android, or GarageBand or Audacity on a computer.) We also love the StoryCorps App on any device — it allows you to select interview questions and record and upload an interview.

## VOCABULARY:

- **Open-ended question:** A question that can't be answered with just "yes" or "no." Open-ended questions often begin with who, what, when, where, why, or how.
- **Follow-up questions:** The questions you ask after you hear something and you want to know more about what the speaker is telling you. Asking an interviewee a follow-up questions allows them to elaborate or dig deeper on a topic.

## INTRODUCTION

Stories are everywhere, we're just not always listening. In this activity, we walk through the process of conducting an audio interview.

These step-by-step interview tips were compiled from [SHOUT OUT: A Kid's Guide to Recording Stories](#) by Katie Davis, [Great Interviews/Great Questions](#) by StoryCorps, and [Interviewing Tips](#) from the Radio Diaries DIY Toolkit.

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## CHOOSE A PERSON TO INTERVIEW

Ideally, this is a person in your household. However, you can also call a friend or neighbor on the phone or over a video chat.

1. Who will you interview? What is that person's name?
2. How old is your interview partner?
3. Why did you choose this person?

## CHOOSE A TIME AND PLACE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Even with a friend or family member, set a date and time for the interview. Let your partner know what you'd like to interview them about, what it's for, and how it will be used. (For example, if you'd like to send your recording to RadioActive, let your partner know that's what you plan to do). Arrange a time when both you and your partner will be relaxed and won't be interrupted for 10-30 minutes.

## PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

Prepare 10-15 questions that you will ask your partner using the [Great Questions List](#) from StoryCorps. Write down the questions you will ask your partner.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

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### PRACTICE WITH YOUR RECORDER

Choose your digital audio recorder, like a smartphone, and choose your recording app. iPhones have a built-in recording app called Voice Memos. We also love the [StoryCorps app](#).

If you're using a smartphone, the microphone is located at the bottom of the phone, near where you talk when you're making a call. For the best audio quality, make sure your device's mic is pointed toward the person speaking, about six inches from their mouth.

For more mobile recording apps and recording tips, check out [SoundBites Activity #2](#).

### CHOOSE A QUIET PLACE TO DO THE INTERVIEW

Record your interview in the quietest place possible. Be careful of TVs, traffic noise, wind, and anything that will be distracting from the interview. Ask your partner to turn off their phone before you begin.

The best places for interviews are small rooms with soft furniture, like a small bedroom. You'll want to avoid large rooms, or rooms with tiled or concrete floors if possible. Avoid doing an interview in the kitchen unless it's your only option — refrigerators can make an annoying sound that you might not notice until you listen back to the tape.

To keep your microphone about six inches away from your partner's mouth comfortably, you'll need to sit very close to your partner. You may need to rest your elbow on your knee or on a table. Or you can make a mic stand out of a stack of books or boxes, so the phone sits at mouth height. Don't be afraid to move around or rearrange furniture before you start the interview. You should be in charge of holding or placing the microphone, not your partner.

### SIT DOWN WITH YOUR PARTNER

Remind your partner what you're doing, how long it will last (likely 10-30 minutes) and how your recording will be used. Even family members may be nervous when they know they're being recorded, or they might think this activity is silly. It's your job to put your partner at ease. As you get set up, talk about the weather or joke about the microphone.

It's a good idea to begin recording a few minutes before you actually start the interview. That helps you avoid the uncomfortably dramatic statement: "Okay, now we will begin recording." At the start of an interview people are usually stiff and self-conscious but, after a while, they forget all about the recorder and start to be themselves.

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## ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN

Begin by asking some warm-up questions so you both get comfortable. As you go down your list of questions, listen closely to your partner's answers. Let your chosen questions guide the discussion, but not control it. Make sure you ask follow-up questions. You never know what unexpected and wonderful new things you will learn about a person — no matter how well you think you know them. For more interviewing tips, check out [SoundBites Activity #4](#).

### [More interview tips from StoryCorps.](#)

When you finish the interview, thank your partner and tell them what the interview has meant to you. Did you learn something? Was there some advice you might try to remember?

## SHARE YOUR RECORDING WITH US

We would love to hear your interviews! If you share your audio recording with us, we may feature it on [kuow.org](http://kuow.org).

To share your audio recording, you can email it to us at [radioactive@kuow.org](mailto:radioactive@kuow.org) with the subject line **"SoundBites Activity #5 - Interview."** If your interview is longer than 8 minutes, it's likely too big to email. In that case, you can upload your file to SoundCloud or Google Drive or DropBox or a similar file sharing site, and share the link to the file with us over email.

## MORE RECORDING AND INTERVIEWING RESOURCES

- [SHOUT OUT: A Kid's Guide to Recording Stories](#) (Transom)
- [Interviewing with the StoryCorps App](#) (StoryCorps)
- [Interviewing Tips](#) (Radio Diaries)
- [Before the First Question](#) (Transom)
- [Interviewing: The Basics](#) (Transom)
- [Educator's Guide to Teaching Interviewing Skills](#) (Radio Rookies)