*BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY*

**Fall**

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# Interviewing

First, some basics. The person you interview is the **subject**. You are the **interviewer**.

Interviewing can be as scary as hell, but remember that the person you are interviewing is probably twice as nervous as you. After all, they are worried about sounding dumb on your podcast. And they might be right to be worried – most people don't naturally know how to tell a story for the radio. But that's okay! As an interviewer, it is your job to get the subject to tell a good story – and even your most nervous subject can tell a good story. Here are some tips for getting a good interview.

**Before the Interview**

Know what you want. Ideally, you should go into the interview with a plan. Not a strict step-by-step plan. Know what you want your subject to say.

That's crazy, right? You can't control what your subject says. But if you know that you want your brother to talk about soccer, specifically the moment that he scored the tie-breaking goal, then your plan should be to ask him about that. It's simple, but having a plan will help you keep on topic – and that will help your subject stay on topic too.

Calm down. If you're calm, your subject will be calm.

**Preparing Your Subject**

Fair warning. You shouldn't tell your subject exactly what you want them to talk about, and they definitely should not be reading from cards. But it's only fair to warn them at the beginning of the interview that you want to talk about the time their cat Fluffy died in a skiing accident. That gives them a moment to collect their thoughts and be emotionally prepared for the interview.

Interrupting. Make sure your subject knows that they can and should interrupt you. If they have something great to say, you don't want them waiting for you to finish asking your question. In the meantime, they may forget what they were going to say!

**During the Interview**

Keep your plan in mind. Don't forget that you have a few things that you really want your subject to talk about. Write down a list if you have to.

Ask open-ended questions. Asking "yes" or "no" questions will only get you "yes" or "no" answers.

Show, don't tell. This is a phrase that gets kicked around every storytelling medium, but it is so important for radio. If the subject (and you) are not describing the scene, then the audience will not be able to create a mental image of what is going on in the story. Ask your subject to describe where they were, what they saw, what did it feel like?

Don't be afraid to ask tough questions. Sometimes, it's awkward to ask questions. It might be a touchy subject, or it might come off as being critical. But you can get great responses by asking these questions. Say you're talking to someone who got in an accident. Did they really think it was a good idea to get in the car with a drunk driver? Don't they feel some responsibility? Maybe they'll get mad, but that's okay. Listening to people defend themselves is interesting.

However, don't go overboard. There's a difference between asking critical questions and just criticizing the person for who they are. It isn't about judging them. It is about getting them to think (and speak) about their decisions.

**After the Interview**

Thank them for their time.

Make sure you know their contact information so you can give them a copy of your podcast. It is good manners to give copies of your work to all the people who helped you make it!