

POLS 391: Political Internship
Dr. Belt
Interview Tips

Once you have developed an outline for your paper, you will have a fair idea about what you might want to ask potential interviewees at your internship site. Here are some tips for preparing for and conducting interviews.

Things to Remember

Interviews are less structured than questionnaires – keep your questions open ended.

Let the interviewee do most of the talking

Ask follow-up questions to make sure you get a complete answer from the interviewee.

How To:

1. Identify potential interviewees
2. Design a list of questions
3. Get permission and arrange interviews. Interview lower-level people first.
4. Preparation - read whatever information regarding your topic that is easily available. This saves interviewee's time by answering your own questions wherever possible and it gives you a basis for deciding which questions to ask and in which order. It also helps you interpret and understand the significance of what is being said and to catch inconsistencies.
5. Do interviews
6. Choose a setting with minimal distractions.
7. Do one at a time.
8. Be conversational and do not "rapid fire" the questions.
9. Make eye contact and let them know that you are listening intently.
 - Do not challenge their statements of fact or reject their opinions.
 - Stress that you are "learning" from them, and try not to show off your knowledge of the subject just to try to impress them
 - Adjust to interviewee's personality and style
 - Record answers inconspicuously
 - Avoid telling them what other people said
10. Write-up the answers in a way that is more intelligible than your notes. Do this right away.
11. Verify that you have the information, re-contact the interviewee if you need more.