

Tips for interviewing

The text, and tips below, come from [https://scalabrini.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Scalabrini Centre Cape Town Reporting on Migration in South Africa Journalists Guide 2019-1.pdf](https://scalabrini.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Scalabrini_Centre_Cape_Town_Reporting_on_Migration_in_South_Africa_Journalists_Guide_2019-1.pdf)

Interviews must meet the needs of the interviewee and provide a space for them to open up about their story and be heard. It is important to honour this and be respectful, mindful, safe and responsible. Below are essential tips to observe before, during and after an interview, and when conducting an interview that is broadcast on radio or television.

BEFORE AN INTERVIEW

- **Research**

Inform yourself about migration generally and the challenges cross-border migrants face. This will aid in your compassion and sensitivity when interviewing them.

- **Build Trust**

Spend time with your interviewee before the interview. The more you establish a relationship with the interviewee, the more comfortable they will be, which will allow for a better interview.

- **Format**

- a. Schedule the interview in a safe space that is pre-approved by the interviewee.
- b. Ensure that there is enough time and that the interview is not rushed.
- c. Take the time to review your process with the interviewee.
- d. Allow the interviewee to bring a support person to accompany them during the interview.
- e. Prepare a comfort kit for your interviewee, including tissues and water.

- **Check your Assumptions**

Be aware of the assumptions you take into the interview. Do not approach the interview with negative assumptions.

- **Referral Numbers**

Ensure that you have referral numbers on hand for the interviewee, including crisis numbers. While they have agreed to be interviewed, they may be triggered by the memories

- **Expectations**

Have an open conversation with the interviewee about your expectations and the information you need and provide them with some sample questions of what you might

ask. This will prepare the interviewee and will allow them the space to inform you of their boundaries. You may need to then adjust your questions accordingly.

- **Informed Consent**

It is vital that the interviewee is made fully aware of the consequences of being interviewed, including:

- a. The intended publication
- b. That they will remain anonymous (unless they give express permission otherwise)
- c. That the interview will remain confidential (unless they give express permission otherwise)
- d. That they do not have to answer questions they don't want to
- e. If you intend to record the interview. They have the right to request the interview not be recorded
- f. Where the interview will be stored after the interview
- g. If you use the interviewee's story in future, other than what they have agreed to, ask for their permission first.

- **Interpreter**

If you need an interpreter, ask an organisation that works with cross-border migrants if they can recommend someone who is an appropriate choice for this type of interview. Before the interview day, meet with the interpreter to go over interview questions and appropriate terminology and language. Keep in mind that the interviewee might be more comfortable with someone of their own sex or gender.

- **Gender**

Be cognisant of your own sex and gender in relation to the interviewee. For example, if the interviewee is a woman, she might not want to be interviewed by a man. In that case, ask if she would prefer if a female colleague of yours to interview her instead.

DURING AN INTERVIEW

- **Show Compassion**

Retelling a story of experiencing xenophobia for example can be difficult and traumatic. Be compassionate and understanding. Panic attacks are common symptoms of trauma and may arise during the interview.

- **Body Language**

Be aware of your body language during the interview. Allow enough space between yourself and the interviewee to make them feel comfortable.

- **Don't touch**

Don't touch the interviewee, unless they have given you permission to do so to comfort them. If you touch them without permission, they might feel triggered or uncomfortable.

- **Acknowledge Different Experiences**

No two people are the same. Experiences of migration differ from person to person and are shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, disability and other social locations. The interview provides a space in which to explore these intersectionalities, which are important to frame your article in. It is important to honour each person's individual experiences and to be aware that there is no right or wrong way to act during the interview.

- **Respect Boundaries**

Interviewees have the right to choose how and when they want to tell their story, as well as what they are willing to tell. If they are uncomfortable answering a question, do not probe for more information.

- **Stay on Topic**

Do not add questions that veer from the initial pre-interview discussion on expectations and sample questions. If you are going to ask difficult questions, explain why you are asking them, e.g. "I am going to ask you about the incident. I am doing this because I want to ensure the accuracy of my article and do justice to your experience."

- **Identification**

- a. Ask how the interviewee would like to be identified.
- b. Ask if they would like to remain anonymous, be identified by pseudonym or their real name (or any other possible identifying details, e.g. location). This will have been established during the informed consent process. Ensure that the editor is aware of these factors and why it is important not to change them.

- **Use of Photos**

Do not take photos of the interviewee unless they have given their written and informed consent. The use of stock photography portraying migration negatively should also be avoided.

- **End the Interview Well**

Ask the interviewee if they would like to add anything else and ensure that you bring the conversation back to the present and to things the interviewee finds safe and comfortable.

AFTER AN INTERVIEW

- **Respect Privacy**

Principled, ethical journalism means respecting the privacy of the interviewee and their family. As such, you need to be careful of "jigsaw identification" when granting anonymity. This is when audiences are able to piece together details, such as the location, clothing or age of the survivor, even though you don't name them specifically.

- **Be Impartial**

It is your responsibility not to judge or discriminate. Stay away from implying that the interviewee was to blame for anything that happened. While you may want to add

“colour” to your story, this can unintentionally lead to the onus of blame being placed on the interviewee.

- **Follow Up**

- a. Make yourself available for contact after the interview.
- b. Before sending the article to the editor, allow the interviewee to review it to ensure that
- c. their story is accurately captured.
- d. If they feel uncomfortable with something and want it edited or removed, do so.
- e. Remind them of support crisis numbers that are available to them post-interview.