

MULTIMEDIA TRAINING KIT

Trainers' notes: Radio Interviewing

Developed by: AMARC

Introduction	Participants will learn how to choose a source/interviewee, prepare an interview. Many tips on mastering the interview process itself are given.
Timing/duration	½ day session, can be extended to ¾ day.
Content outline and main topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Preparing an interview (1 hour).o The interview (1 hour).
Target audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o New and experienced community radio practitioners.o Journalists practising without formal training.
Prerequisite skills/knowledge	Participants should have completed the radio scripting unit or be familiar with radio scripting techniques.
Unit objectives/expected outcomes	By the end of the unit participants should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Select a proper source for interview.o Prepare appropriate questions for an interview.o Instil trust in a source while interviewing.
Pre-workshop activities	-
Notes on using exercises	<p>The exercises consist of a prepared interview and peer review to be repeated one or more times, depending on available time.</p> <p>Suggested topics for interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o The role of community radio in promoting democracy.o Community participation in radio journalism.o The role of radio in shaping people's lives.o The role of radio in promoting democracy and good governance. <p>Questions should include one or two topics that the interviewee is likely to try and avoid. For instance, a question on the political situation of his or her country.</p> <p>Other topics can be chosen by the trainer and/or the workshop participants. They must be related to the students' interest or work so that they yield genuine answers and make the context relevant.</p>

	<p>Participants should be divided into groups of 3 or 4.</p> <p>Each trainee should pick a person from the same group to interview and a topic for that interview.</p> <p>Trainees should then fill out an interview preparation questionnaire individually.</p> <p>Trainees then take turns interviewing their chosen source. Immediately after the interview, the group helps the trainee in answering questions in their interview evaluation form and discusses any further issues.</p> <p>Depending on available time, this exercise can be repeated within the same groups.</p>
Resources included with unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Trainers' notes. o Handout. o List of additional resources. o Exercises. o Example. o Glossary. o Pre-workshop skills evaluation. o Post-workshop skills evaluation. o Materials evaluation form. o Workshop evaluation form. o Copyright statement.
Additional trainer resources	-
Equipment needed	Recording and playback equipment (microphone, reel tape, tape, minidisc etc.)
Comments	This unit is essentially a practical course. Theory does not apply as much as tips and tricks do; the trainer will need to emphasise practice over theory.

MULTIMEDIA TRAINING KIT

Radio Interviewing Handout

Developed by: AMARC

MULTIMEDIA TRAINING KIT	1
Radio Interviewing Handout	1
About this document	1
Copyright information	1
Introduction	2
Preparing the interview	2
Choosing a topic	2
Choosing whom to interview	2
Contacting the interviewee	3
Planning the interview	3
Location	3
The interview	3
On and off the record	4
Other types of interviews	5

About this document

These materials are part of the Multimedia Training Kit (MMTK). The MMTK provides an integrated set of multimedia training materials and resources to support community media, community multimedia centres, telecentres, and other initiatives using information and communications technologies (ICTs) to empower communities and support development work.

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Introduction

Interviewing is a very important part of journalism. It is often a primary source of information, whether it be for news production or in-depth topics.

Some consider interviewing to be an art. Certainly, it is not a highly theoretical topic but rather a skill that develops with practice and experience. This unit attempts to give workshop participants basic techniques and tips for successful interviews.

Preparing the interview

Choosing a topic

To perform proper interviews, one must first pick an appropriate topic and familiarize oneself with the subject. One also needs to choose an angle to the topic.

Choosing whom to interview

The better you know your topic, the easier it will be to choose an appropriate person to interview. Not knowing your topic in enough depth may leave a bad impression on your guest.

The impact of the interview depends on whom you interview and who will be listening to the interview.

Make sure your audience can relate to your source/interviewee.

Let's imagine a radio program about a new agricultural technique, aimed at farming populations. It would be much wiser to interview some farmers who have used the technique than to interview a foreign technical expert.

On the other hand, imagine a story about the economy, aimed at educated urban listeners. The choice of an articulate economist might be more appropriate than "person on the street" mini interviews.

The closer your audience feels to the interviewee, the more the interview will arouse their interest.

There are of course exceptions. Certain topics require interviewing people directly involved with the event.

It sometimes helps to share your choice with colleagues. You may sometimes get a different perspective on the person you intend to interview. A colleague may have interviewed that person before and may be in a position to give you some tips and hints.

Contacting the interviewee

Once you have chosen your source(s), you will contact them to request the interview.

Make sure the topic of the interview is clear.

You can take advantage of this contact to ask one or two questions to help you further your research. This generally shows interest in the topic and will be appreciated.

Planning the interview

Once your interview is set up, you need to prepare your questions and notes.

You must always prioritize the most important questions because you never know how long the interview will take and how far down the list you will get.

Avoid trying to obtain as much information as possible - rather pick a precise angle and try to keep your questions around it.

Avoid "closed-ended" questions that can be answered by yes or no.

Examples:

Closed-ended: Do you think that this event is significant ?

Open-ended: What, according to you, is the significance of this event ?

Ask questions in relation to what you will do with them. That is, if you are interviewing for the daily news, ask only as many questions as you reasonably need to have material for editing. Asking 25 questions and using only one may annoy your source and s/he may be reluctant to agree to further interviews.

You need to give your source the feeling that you know exactly where you are going.

Even though your questions are prepared in advance, be prepared to improvise if the situation requires. Your questionnaire is just a guide. Be ready to ask questions that arise from your interviewee's answers and which are not prepared in advance.

Location

Choose a calm, comfortable location. Noisy environments should be avoided. You should choose somewhere where you will not be interrupted at all.

The interview

Immediately before going to the interview, test your equipment. Better take those extra five minutes *before* you are with your source! Take extra batteries just in case.

Be on time. Being late conveys the impression that you are not all that interested.

If you are meeting the source for the first time, take the time to introduce yourself.

Take the time to explain the context of the interview and what you intend to do with it. This will help your source feel at ease.

Initially ask your source to introduce himself/herself. This will allow you to adjust the sound levels on your recording device.

Don't rush your source. Some people need more time to adjust than others. The time you spend chatting builds a link and will help ensure that you can contact the person after the interview for clarifications.

Try to seem as present as possible and to show interest for your source's answers. Occasional nods convey interest and attention.

Your body language conveys how you feel and can help make your source more relaxed.

If you stumble when asking a question, it is probably better to ask from the start again. Everybody makes mistakes.

Do not hesitate to reformulate questions that have not been answered properly or which received an off-topic answer.

Prepare some diversion in case you need a short break to mentally re-organize your ideas. For instance, you could tend to the recording device.

Give your source some freedom but make sure you guide and control the conversation.

Do not hesitate to interrupt if you do not understand something. Chances are your listeners will not understand either. This is especially true for technical topics.

You can be firm but never aggressive.

Try to understand your source and make sure you never give the impression that you want to trap them or that you are "out to get them"!

At the end of the interview, you can ask your source if you have forgotten to ask a question or whether they have anything to add. Depending on the topic, you can also ask them to sum up what they have spoken about.

If you plan on pursuing the same topic on another occasion, you can ask your source if they can recommend other people who can help you.

If you need sound effects, take them separately from the interview and mix them back at the studio.

On and off the record

During an interview, your source may speak on and off the record. You should strictly respect this and never quote a source on something that was said off the record.

In general, the tape recorder is a good indicator of what is on and what is off the record. A safe rule would be to never quote your source if the information hasn't been recorded. The general perception is that what is on tape is on the record and what isn't is off the record.

Always make your source aware of what you consider on and off the record.

Other types of interviews

Field interviews

This type of interview is usually done on the spot of an event, be it at the scene of a news event, a live performance etc.

For this type of interview, you may not have as much time to prepare and do background research. It will help if you do jot down some questions before the interview but you will need to improvise more.

Person on the street interviews

In this type of interview, people are chosen at random on the street, and asked to voice their opinion about an event or a personality.

Person on the street interviews are usually very short - two, maybe three questions at most.

This type of interview is often used to get the feel of public opinion on a particular topic and eventually inserted in a larger story.

Phone interviews

This type of interview differs in that you do not have visual contact with the source being interviewed. You therefore need to try and compensate using voice only.

Since this type of interview can be stopped at any moment, it is better to prioritize questions.

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Exercises: Radio Interviewing

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Interview Preparation			
Topic:	Angle:		
Person to interview:	Will your listeners relate to the source/interviewee?		
Sources of documentation on the topic:			
Advance questions to ask when contacting source/interviewee:			
Interview context and planned usage (to give to interviewee):			
Questions:			
Questions checklist		Yes	No
Are all your questions open-ended?			
If not, is this deliberate?			
Are the most important questions placed first?			
Is there any repetition?			
Are you asking more questions than you could reasonably use?			
Where will the interview take place?	Required background sounds or effects		

Interview Evaluation		
Did you take the time to make your source feel comfortable before starting the interview?	Yes	No
Was the number of questions appropriate? If not, why not?	Yes	No
Did you feel you had mastered the topic sufficiently?	Yes	No
Were you able to improvise questions relating to your source's answers? If not, why not?	Yes	No
Was the location for the interview appropriate? If not, why not?	Yes	No
Did you take the time to introduce yourself?	Yes	No
Did you ask your source to introduce him/herself?	Yes	No
Did the source avoid some questions?	Yes	No
If so, were you able to re-formulate them and obtain some kind of answer?	Yes	No
Did you feel "in control" of the conversation? If not, why?	Yes	No
Did you feel your source was at ease and comfortable? If not, why not?	Yes	No
Did you ask your source for the names of other people you could potentially interview on the same topic?	Yes	No
Did you ask your source to summarize their ideas at the end?	Yes	No
Did you ask your source if he/she had anything to add?	Yes	No
Other comments on the interview?		

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Example: Radio Interviewing

Developed by: AMARC

Preparing an interview: example

Choice of topic

For this sample interview, the chosen topic will be the current economic situation in the country, which seems on the verge of a major financial collapse. The angle will be the effects of the situation on ordinary people.

The audience of our fictional radio station is workers and low-income people in an urban setting. To make sure the interview is of interest to the audience, we should broadly discuss the causes and the consequences of the situation, and not go into technical detail.

Choice of whom to interview

Because of our audience, we should look for people who have an interest in the economy but are not technicians or technocrats. Possibilities include:

- o A public relations person from the ministry of economy and finance.
- o A representative of a consumer group.
- o A representative of a group defending workers' rights.

After discussing this with colleagues, it has been decided that the most neutral choice, with regard to the current political situation and editorial line of the station, would be a representative of a consumer group.

Contacting the interviewee

You would now contact the interviewee by telephone. First introduce yourself, and then go on to describe the interview you are planning, clearly stating topic and expectations.

To close the call, ask the source for information on where to find easily comprehensible statistics on the current situation and some measure of its effects on ordinary people.

Planning the interview

Once we have done appropriate research, it's time to prepare the questions. Let's have a first stab at them:

1. Can you please introduce yourself?
2. Can you tell us about the current economic situation in the country?
3. Is there anything we, as citizens, can do?
4. How do you think this situation will evolve over the next year?
5. What is the government doing about it?
6. Have workers and ordinary people started feeling the impact of this situation?
7. Do you think it will get much worse for workers and ordinary people?
8. What are the causes of this situation?

9. What is the impact of globalization on this situation?

Let's review these questions:

Can you please introduce yourself?

Might be better to specify "briefly" as some people like to talk about themselves

Can you tell us about the current economic situation in the country?

This is fairly vague and can lead to answers that aren't relevant to our angle. Adding an introduction may help to narrow the focus or direct the source to the angle: Food prices are rising; some products are in very short supply. Can you tell us about the economic situation we are facing?

Is there anything we, as citizens, can do?

This is a closed-ended question but it is likely that the interviewee will elaborate on it.

How do you think this situation will evolve over the next year?

This seems like an adequate question.

Do you think it will get much worse for workers and ordinary people?

Again, a closed-ended question. In this case, we may want a yes or no answer with more detail given afterwards, in which case we would add a second question to get more detail: "How will it get worse/better?"

What is the government doing about it?

Depending on the political inclinations of your guest, you may need to ask additional questions to obtain a clear answer or tone him/her down somewhat.

Have workers and ordinary people started feeling the impact of this situation?

This is a closed-ended question. Hopefully, the interviewee would answer at length but it may be better to open it up. Question 2 looked at the impacts briefly; to avoid repetition we should try to refine this question further. Aside from prices rising and the scarcity of certain products, what have been the effects of this situation to date?

What are the causes of this situation?

This seems adequate although, it may lead to very long answers. It may be a good idea to prepare some way of helping your guest to focus his/her answer.

What is the impact of globalization on this situation?

This is an adequate question although it is quite wide. Notice it is at the end. Depending on the guest or the editorial policy of the station, it could be left here or moved higher up.

Before we re-list the questions, let's sort them by order of importance. This is somewhat subjective as the interviewer knows best which questions s/he wants answered first, while the interviewee is not yet tired. It can also depend on the interviewee's personality; some give shorter answers at first and warm up towards the end, etc.:

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself?
2. Food prices are rising; some products are in very short supply. Can you tell us about the economic situation we are facing?
3. Aside from prices rising and the scarcity of certain products, what have been the effects of this situation to date? How will it get worse/better?
4. Have workers and ordinary people started feeling the impact of this situation?
5. Do you think it will get much worse for workers and ordinary people?
6. What is the government doing about this?
7. Is there anything we, as citizens, can do?
8. What are the causes of this situation?
9. What is the impact of globalization on this situation?

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Glossary: Radio Interviewing

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CLOSED-ENDED QUESTION	Question which can be answered by yes or no.
INTERVIEW	A meeting at which information is obtained. Usually follows a question and answer format. An important technique in radio journalism.
ON THE RECORD	Information that the reporter is free to use in her or his final work.
OFF THE RECORD	Information that the reporter should not use directly or should not attribute to the source.
OPEN-ENDED QUESTION	Question which normally requires more than a "yes/no" answer.
SOURCE	Person who provides information to a reporter. Similar to interviewee.

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Additional resources: Radio Interviewing

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Internet

Interview Tips from NYT Learning network

Tips and information on interviews from Campus Weblines, a New York Times on the Web Learning Network web site.

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/specials/weblines/461.html>

IJNet Interviewing

Tip sheets on interview techniques and strategies.

http://www.ijnet.org/Training_Materials/Journalism_Basics.html

Poynter Institute Articles on Interviewing

The art of the interview, based on a presentation by Neal Conan

http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=9572&sid=8

Guidelines for Interviewing Confidential Sources: Who, When, and Why? By Al Tompkins

http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=4361&sid=8

What is Oral testimony?

A guide to oral testimony interviews by the Panos Institute

<http://www.panosinst.org/Guides/ot.shtml>

Books

Dreifus, Claudia. 1999. *Interview*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Hekkanen, Ernest. 2001. *The Radio Interview*. Vancouver: New Orphic Publishers.

Kalish, Karen. 1997. *I'll see you on the radio: How to prepare for and give radio interviews*. St. Louis: Kalish Communications.

McLaughlin, Paul. 1990. *How to interview: the art of asking questions*. 2nd Edition. Vancouver: Self Counsel Press.

Rafe, Stephen. 1991. *Mastering the News Media Interview: how to succeed at television, radio, and print interviews*. Warrenton: Starfire/Rapport Communications.

Stewart, Charles J., and Cash, William B. 2002. *Interviewing Principles and Practices: Applications and Exercises*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.

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Pre-workshop skills assessment: Radio Interviewing

Developed by: AMARC

1. Do you perform interviews in your current job?

Yes
No
I have only done so a few times

2. Do you feel almost all of the work in an interview is done when you have your guest in front of the microphone?

Yes
No
Not sure

3. Do you feel proficiency in a topic is the most important factor when choosing a guest to interview?

Yes
No
Not sure

4. Do you understand basic techniques to make your guest feel at ease?

Yes
No
Not sure

5. Do you know what it means to be on and off the record?

Yes
No
Not sure

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Post-workshop skills assessment: Radio Interviewing

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1. Do you understand the importance of good interview preparation?

Yes
No
Not sure

2. Do you feel you understand how to pick guests that will appeal to your audience?

Yes
No
Not sure

3. Do you feel in a better position to make guests feel comfortable, to be able to help them give you the information that you need?

Yes
No
Not sure

4. Do you understand the significance of being on or off the record?

Yes
No
Not sure

5. Do you feel more at ease while interviewing as well as able to improvise when needed?

Yes
No
Not sure

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Workshop evaluation: Radio Interviewing

Presented by: Organization/trainer

Thank you for attending this workshop. Please fill in the evaluation form below – your feedback will help us improve our future training programmes.

1. Your name and e-mail address (optional) _____

2. Were the workshop aims made clear to you in advance (e.g. through the invitation)?

Not clear
Somewhat clear
Very clear

3. How useful did you find the workshop overall?

Not useful
Somewhat useful
Very useful

4. How satisfied were you with the trainer?

Not satisfied
Somewhat satisfied
Very satisfied

5. How satisfied were you with the handouts?

Not satisfied
Somewhat satisfied
Very satisfied

6. How did you find the pace of the workshop?

Too slow
About right
Too fast

7. How did you find the length of the workshop?

Too short
About right
Too long

8. How satisfied were you with the organization of the workshop?

Not satisfied
Somewhat satisfied
Very satisfied

9. Please use this space for any other comments and suggestions for improvement

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Materials evaluation form: Radio Interviewing

Developed by: AMARC

We welcome feedback from trainers who have used these materials. By answering the following questions you can help us to improve and expand the MMTK set of resources. Please note that all questions are optional!

Please return your completed questionnaire by e-mail to AATohill@apc.org

1. Name _____

2. E-mail address _____

3. Organization: _____

4. How useful did you find the materials in this unit?

Very useful ___

Useful ___

Not useful ___

5. Did you use the materials "as is" with your students, or adapt them?

Used "as is" ___

Adapted ___

6. If you have any suggestions for how the MMTK team could improve this unit, please tell us about them.

7. Other comments

THANK YOU!

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Copyright statement: Radio Interviewing

Unit developed by: AMARC

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