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The goal of a good interview is to get more than just limited answers to questions pertaining to background information the interviewer may or may not know in great enough detail to get the interviewee to expound in interesting detail.

Forget you ever learned these words:

- who
- what
- where
- why
- how

A replacement list for the interrogatives includes the following:

- Tell me about...
- Describe...
- I was wondering about...
- I'm curious about...
- Paint me a picture...



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16 easy steps you simply cannot overlook

- Do the pre-interview checklist
- Avoid the “just the facts ma’am” mindset
- Don’t interrupt the interviewee
- Don’t use a voice-activated recorder
- Use a lapel mic
- Conduct a test-run before you begin
- Keep spare batteries on hand
- Put a note on the door asking all visitors to “Go away – interviewing in progress”
- Turn off refrigerators and freezers
- Remove pets from the taping area
- Stop all ticking clocks (especially koo-koo clocks!)
- Turn off all cell phones and beepers
- Unplug telephones and answering machines
- Don’t coach your subject
- Don’t discuss interview topics during setup
- Don’t ask questions, use basic prompts

Getting the Perfect Interview



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You're interviewing someone and want to know what he did during World War II. What's the best way to get him to share his story?

The Question:

"You're a World War II veteran, aren't you?"

"No."

A Better Question (an open-ended one):

"Where were you during World War II?"

"I was in California during World War II."

Another open-ended question:

"What did you do during World War II?"

"I built bombers."

The Best "Question:"

"Describe your experiences during World War II."

"I had severely injured my right leg back in the summer of 1932 while logging in northern California. Ever since that time, I hadn't had much feeling in my foot and walked with a bit of a limp. Ask my son about growing up with a dad that couldn't take him hiking.

"I wanted to enlist and prove my manhood, but they rejected me because of my bum leg. Their decision really hurt at the time. Looking back though, I'm glad I didn't go. Four of my best friends didn't come back from their tours in western Europe.

"I ended up staying stateside and taking a job building bombers. That was the start of my career in aerospace."

Getting the Perfect Interview



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More than anything else, make your subject feel like the most important, most interesting person you have ever encountered. Do that, and people will talk to you, all night long if you have the time.

Getting the Perfect Interview