

HOW TO INTERVIEW WELL

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

- Your goal is to ask questions in a way which gets people to talk about what interests you.
- Ask “**Open Questions**” rather than yes/no questions. Yes/no questions help the interviewer gather basic information such as “What year did you arrive in Los Angeles?” Open questions give the person you are interviewing a chance to talk at length about the subject. *Open questions can begin with the following phrases:*
 - TELL ME ABOUT (the first place you lived in Los Angeles.)
 - WHAT WAS IT LIKE (to land in a city where you didn’t know anybody?)
 - IN WHAT WAYS (did you get involved in the Jewish community here?)
 - DESCRIBE (your first job here.)
 - WHY (did you decide to leave.....and come to Los Angeles?)
 - HOW (did you learn how to drive?)
- Think of **appropriate “follow up” questions** to get more information.
 - A skilled interviewer asks a follow-up questions if the response to your first question is inadequate. Sometimes you have to ask a question in a few different ways. For example:
 - Question: “Tell me about the first place you lived in Los Angeles.”
 - Answer: “We moved to Boyle Heights; I have good memories there.”
 - Follow-up question: “Can you describe some of those good memories and tell me about some of your favorite places in the neighborhood?”
- **Avoid “leading questions.”** These are questions that encourage the person you are interviewing to answer in a way that agrees with what *you* think, rather than what *they* think.
 - For example: “Wasn’t it hard to start in a new high school in 10th grade?” That question implies your opinion and may limit their response.
 - Ask your questions in a way which doesn’t show your own opinions. For example, “What were some of the challenges and opportunities of moving to a new city and starting a new high school in 10th grade?”

INTERVIEWING ETIQUETTE

- Being a good listener is essential. The person you are interviewing can sense if you are not listening and may lose interest in sharing important parts of his/her story with you. Your attentiveness is communicated by:
 - Maintaining eye contact
 - Waiting until the person is done speaking before asking another question.
 - Coming up with a thoughtful follow-up question.
 - Not repeating a question that has been already asked.
 - Allow the person you are interviewing time to pause and reflect. Be careful not to rush in with another question. Often, quiet moments precede an emotional topic or important topic.

NOTE-TAKING

- Tape-record your interview to document the details. Later, listen to it and write down the main points.
- If you cannot tape-record, jot down the main ideas and some details during the interview. After the interview, fill in the details while your memory is fresh.

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