

Interview Tips

DO:

1. Have the person spell his or her name for you.
2. Get the date of birth rather than the age. Ages can change during the course of a story.
3. Always ask about past experience, school, hobbies, etc.
4. Have a prepared list of questions, but be sure to add questions you think of as the interview develops.
5. Pay attention to what the photographer is taking pictures of. You want to be sure you have enough information about the action and/or person to write an informative caption. Make notes about pictures. Note what a person is wearing, interesting features, etc.
6. LISTEN! This is the most important point of all. Listen to the answers. You will think of more questions and develop a much better story.

DON'T:

1. Don't ask questions that can be answered with yes or no. Ask open-ended questions that will encourage the person to speak.
2. Don't give up. If you have a hard time getting someone to talk, try asking the person to explain something as if telling a best friend or parent about it.

EXAMPLE:

Q: What is the most fun you had here today?

A: Talking to the clown.

Q: What did you say to the clown?

A: I don't know, just stuff.

Q: If you were telling your best friend about what the clown said to you, what would you say? *(As the person begins to explain, don't be afraid to stop and ask for more details.)*

A: I would tell my friend that the clown had a really goofy face and made me laugh.

Q: Can you describe what was so goofy about his face? What did it look like exactly?

3. Don't rush an interview. Give the person time to talk. The more you talk to someone, the more likely he or she will be to say something interesting and quotable.
4. Don't take so long that you don't get all your questions asked! Does this sound like a contradiction? In a way it is. As you become better at interviewing, you will discover how to know when to stop an interview. You don't want to stop it too soon, and you don't want the interviewee to cut you off and say you are out of time. That's why it's important to have a list of questions to work from. If the person tries to cut you off, you can always say: "Please just one more question." Then ask the most important question still on your list. AND you may be able to sneak in one or two more if you can keep your subject talking.