

# A Reporter's Most Critical Skills

The ability to talk comfortably with people and to persuade them to give you information

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## Questions: Precise Instrument

Make the difference  
between an answer  
and a quotable answer

The keys that open a  
door to a person's life  
or beliefs



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# The Reporter Steers

The source paddles

Tough questions are those that make the person you're interviewing work

"Why do you believe that?"

- **Requires an explanation**

"How did you arrive at the conclusion?"

- **Requires a description**

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# Five Types of Questions

## 1. Open-ended questions

- **How?, Why?, When?, Where?**
- **Helpful for people who've never been interviewed before**

## 2. Closed-ended

- **Permit sources to give brief unequivocal answers or get a source on record**
- **"Are you 35 years old?" "Yes"**

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## Five Types of Questions

### 3. Double-barreled

- **Ask more than one question at a time**
- **Let a source decide which one to answer**

### 4. Front-loaded

- **Blah-blah-blah—question—blah blah blah—**
- **Slows the pace of your interview**

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# Five Types of Questions

## 5. Statements masquerading as questions

- **There's no question mark at the end**
- **Sound like editorializing**
- **Sources suspect you may be quote-fishing and distrust you**

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# Prepare Questions in Advance

Short and sweet

Stick to the script

Consider what you want to learn during your interview

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# Listen, Really Listen

When you jump in to fill a one-millisecond gap, subjects immediately decide that you aren't really interested in what they have to say

Count to ten

- **They will rush in, rewarding your zipped lips with richer answers**

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