

The show editor's interview checklist

Before the interview

The topic

- What's the focus, the central question you are trying to answer?
- Why is the segment relevant now?

The guest

- Do you want to talk to an eyewitness, affected person, stakeholder, journalist?
- Why is ___ the right guest?
- Have you thought about diversity in selecting ___?

The questions

- What focused questions will you ask? Is it the right number of questions for the segment length?
- Do the questions follow a logical arc? Is there a beginning, middle and end?
- Have you done a pre-interview where you vetted them and ...
 - confirmed that they are who they say they are?
 - gauged their responses to your questions, but without spoiling the conversation for the host? (Tip: Don't ask the questions the same way the host will)
- Have you researched the background of the story and the guest, and presented the key elements in an easily readable way in the host passoff or script?
- If appropriate, have you supplied your host with ideas for pushback?
- Is there tape that can be played in the intro?
- If it's a two-way with a guest, is there tape that can be played as part of a host question?
- If it's a two-way with your own reporter, is there tape that can be played as part of an answer?

Other things

- Have you explored all connection options to get the best possible audio quality?
- Have you written a draft intro ahead of the interview?
- Have you written a pronouncer for the guest's name?

During the interview (live or taped)

As you listen and fact-check, and the producer takes detailed notes, ask yourself:

- Are there any errors that need correcting?
- Are the most obvious questions being asked?
- Is pushback needed anywhere?
- Is there an important follow-up question, or one the host overlooked?

After the interview (taped)

- Which elements do the host and producer feel should make the final cut?
- Which do you feel are essential?
- Does the conversation work in the time allotted?
- Do you and the producer have an agreed-on workflow for the edit?
- Does the intro need to be updated?

After the edit

- Does the conversation flow naturally?
- Does the structure work?
- Does the intro draw in listeners?
- Have you double-checked all the facts, names, numbers and dates?
- If you used tape, does it help the flow or hinder it?
- Does the conversation feel slow at any point? If it does, more cutting may be necessary.
- Is it a memorable conversation?
- Does it leave the listener thinking?
- Does it live up to expectations and answer the central question (see above)?

Checklist by Jerome Socolovsky. Thanks to Deborah George, Scott Saloway, Denise Couture, Gail Austin and Sarah Oliver.