

The Mentor Interview

The mentor interview is a great chance to learn a lot about someone that you work with at your internship.

Your final product will consist of an introductory article followed by an edited transcript of your interview.

Before the interview:

- **Do your homework**—learn everything you can in advance, so that way your questions go deeper in the mentor’s personal story. For example, one interviewer might ask, “Where did you go to college?” while another interviewer could ask, “How did you decide to go to UCLA?” The second question will probably get a more interesting answer!
- **Conduct the interview in a familiar, comfortable setting.** If you want to use a conference room or go to lunch together, you may need to schedule this ahead of time.

During the interview:

- **Let the interview be a conversation**—you don’t need to stick to a script. Keep your interview open. Allow yourself to ask questions that come to mind as you’re listening to the conversation. Even more important, be open to what the person wants to tell you. An answer that seems off-topic might lead to an important personal story.
- **Record the interview** (don’t forget to ask permission!). Be ready to go back to your recording later.
- **Ask simple questions that require deep answers.** Questions that start with “Tell me about...” or “What stands out most...” often work well. Steer clear of multi-part, complex questions.

After the interview:

- **Go over your notes and recording as soon as possible.** Expand on them. Ask yourself if you got everything you wanted.
- **Set up a “follow up” if necessary.** Many professional interviewers go back for more after the initial interview. Sometimes they have more ideas after they listen to the tapes. Sometimes they want to clarify ideas when they are creating a final written product. It is highly professional to ask for a follow up in which you focus on a certain part of the original interview.
- **Send a professional, written thank you note or e-mail to the interview subject.**
- **Edit the interview carefully to create a piece of text that “reads well.”**

Please do your background research before: _____

Please generate your mentor interview questions before: _____

Bring your written transcript to class on: _____

Bring a draft ready for critique on: _____

Bring a final draft to class on: _____