

Inquiry Mini-Lessons

Conducting an Interview to Investigate an Inquiry Question

An interview is a text form that requires using prepared questions to obtain information. This lesson shows students how to use an interview to conduct research for an inquiry. It will help students generate focused questions, listen carefully, and record the answers.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

- enlarged version of **Interview BLM**
- markers in two different colours
- prompt cards (*Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *Why?*, *How?*, *Which?*, *If?*)
- sticky notes or file cards
- individual copies of Interview BLM (optional)

Grouping: whole class and partners

Procedure:

1. Display an enlarged version of the Interview BLM on chart paper or an interactive whiteboard and fill in the inquiry question.
2. Explain to students that they are going to learn how to conduct an interview as a way to gather information for their inquiry.
3. **Contacting the person to be interviewed:** Model by thinking aloud. For example, if you have finished the *Animals in Our Lives* unit, and have posed the question, “How would our lives be different without animals?” discuss who you might consider interviewing.

By interviewing people, we can gather information for our inquiry question. We need to think about people to interview and how we can prepare to conduct a good interview. Interviewing requires us to research, prepare the questions we are going to ask, practise the interview, and conduct the interview, recording the answers given. Later, we look at the information gathered and evaluate our findings.

Let's think first about who we might interview. Interviews can be in person, by telephone, email, even Skype; but in person is the best! Mrs. Takada, the librarian has two dogs, so perhaps we could interview her. I will put her name on the form and ask her if she can come by tomorrow morning.

4. Research and Preparation:

Model, by thinking aloud, how you prepare questions to ask in the interview. Remind students that you are looking for questions that give a more detailed response so this interview should not contain questions that elicit “yes” or “no” answers. Record the question(s) on the enlarged BLM.

I know Mrs. Takada spends a lot of time with her dogs! I wonder what would change for her if she no longer had her dogs. A question we could ask Mrs. Takada is “If you no longer had your dogs, how would your life be different?” I know this question cannot be answered with only a “yes” or “no” answer. I will write this question on the form in red.

Teaching Tip: Be sure to record questions and answers in two different colours for visual clarity.

5. Hand out the question prompts (*Who?*, *What?*, *Where?*, *When?*, *Why?*, *How?*, *Which?* and *If?*) to pairs of students, and ask the pairs to come up with one or two more questions for the interview. Have students record their questions on sticky notes or file cards. Collect the questions and select a question or two to record, explaining the reason for your choices. Choose questions that ask for detailed information, e.g., “What might you consider to replace dogs in your life? How do your dogs make you feel? Can you explain what would your life would be like if there were no zoos, farms, or pet stores to visit?”

6. Practise the questions and conduct the interview. Tell students the next steps are practising the questions and then conducting the interview. Have pairs of students practise asking each other their questions. Discuss good interviewing behaviours.

Remember to begin by telling the person the reason for the interview (recorded inquiry question). Listen carefully, recording (in jot notes) the answers to the questions. At the end of the interview, remember to thank the person for taking the time to talk you.

7. Bring in a guest to do a live interview after preparing the questions with your students. This allows you to model the other aspects of interviewing: welcoming the person, explaining the reason for the interview, recording, making jot notes, looking at the person as he or she answers, allowing pauses, thanking the person for his or her input.

Teaching Tip: If you’re doing a whole-class research inquiry, you can work together with the students to prepare for and conduct an interview related to the inquiry. If students are working in pairs, small groups, or individually, they will need extra time to prepare for their interviews using their own copies of the Interview BLM.

Interview BLM

My Name:
Name of Person Interviewed:
Inquiry Question:
Question: Answer:
Question: Answer:
Question: Answer:
Interpret My Findings