

Handout

Creating Effective Interview Questions: A Model

Adapted from Rick Ayers' *Studs Terkel's Working: A Teaching Guide (2001)*

Typically, you want to have enough questions on your list to guide you as you go into your interview (let's say between 10-15). While you might not ask all of them, you want to have them so that you are as prepared as possible.

Usually, interviews have a few Level 1 questions to get some solid background for their readers. Most of the questions are Level 2 questions, which are created to get to the heart of the interview.

You should also always be listening and ready to build on someone's answer to one of your questions with **follow-up questions**. Some basic follow-up questions include:

- Tell me more about...
- Describe what that looked/smelled/sounded/tasted/felt like... (to get at the details!)

WHO I'M INTERVIEWING

Donald F.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFO

He has lived in NYC most of his life. He is 68 years old. He is married with one son. He was in the Air Force... etc. etc.

MY ANGLE what do I want to find out/learn about from this interview

Donald's experiences in the Air Force and what his job as a cook entailed.

LEVEL 1 QUESTIONS

These are the “getting to know you” questions. What basic information do you need to know about this person?

1. Where and when were you born?
2. What is a memory you have of your childhood?
3. What was your family like?
4. What did you enjoy doing as a child?
- 5.

LEVEL 2 QUESTIONS

These are the questions that really get to the main part of your interview and what you want to know/learn more about.

1. How did you become interested in the joining the Air Force?
2. What is a memory you have of your time in the Air Force?
3. Who are some people you remember knowing while you were in the Air Force?
4. What was the best/worst thing about being in the Air Force?
5. How/Why did you become a cook in the Air Force?
6. What was the best/worst thing about being a cook?
7. What else might you have done if you didn't become a cook?
8. How did your experiences in the Air Force affect you?
- 9.
- 10.