

Discussion Programs

Overview: Discussion programs have been a big part of talk radio ever since the very earliest broadcasts. The purpose of a discussion program is to inform the listening about topic or at least the view points of the people involved with the discussion. Discussion shows have a number of similarities to interviews but tend to be less scripted and structured. Discussion shows frequently engage the audience via live telephone calls or emailed/tweeted questions or views.

Running a radio discussion program can be a challenge but the reward is often engaging, imaginative radio that will connect with your listeners in a unique way.

Key skills used include:

- Research and preparation.
- Loose question writing and annotation.
- Close listening and comprehension skills.
- Guest / presenter management.
- Spoken language skills, formal presentations & participating in debate
- Development of confidence & competence in spoken language

Key Stage Goals

English

- **Statutory Requirement (Spoken Language, Years 1 -6):** Pupils should be taught to:
 - Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers. (page 18)
 - Ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge. (page 18)
 - Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions. (page 18)
 - Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings. (page 18)
 - Speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English. (page 18)
 - Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates. (page 18)
 - Gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s) . (page 18)
 - Consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others. (page 18)

Typical Interview Structure

Good interview technique is a useful skill that can be applied in a range of real life situations away from School Radio. The purpose of this resource is to help presenters to develop the skills they need when preparing for an interview and actually interviewing a subject.

As with many things, the key to a good interview is to carefully prepare the questions that you intend to ask and research the person you are interviewing and the subject that you are talking about so that you appear confident and knowledgeable to the listener.

In general the key to a good interview includes the following:

1. Make sure you are interviewing the right person. They should be relevant to the subject matter, carry enough authority to be convincing to your listeners whilst still being engaging and interesting to hold your listeners attention.
2. Do some research on the subject. Make sure you know enough about the subject to understand (in general terms) what you are discussing and are ready to respond if you get an unexpected answer from the person your are interviewing.
3. Prepare your questions in advance. It is crucial to have your questions written out in the order you intend to ask them. You may need to stray from your questions while conducting an interview but you should always strive to return to your prepared questions when you can.
4. Share your questions with the person you are interviewing. Give them time to formulate what they will say and possibly make their own notes.

There are times where you don't want to do this but usually it will be better if there are no surprises for anyone in the interview – can you think of a scenario where this is not true?

5. Before recording or broadcasting your interview, give your guest enough time to get used to speaking into the mic and hearing their voice through the headphones (it sounds weird at first). Use this time to set the 'Trim' for your guest to ensure that both of your voices will have the same volume for your listeners.

To do this, press the Pre-Fade button on your guest's mic channel and ask them to speak normally. Adjust the trim until the VU on the mixer registers around 5 (just below the orange). Make sure you do the same for your mic also.

6. Introduce your guest including the following:
 - a. Name
 - b. Background or reason for inclusion
 - c. Subject of the interview

E.g. 'I am here today speaking to ex-England footballer and international star, David Beckham who is here to tell us about his new book 'Me and my football', so David.....

7. Once you are underway, ask the questions you have prepared and listen to the responses the guest gives. Where appropriate, encourage the guest to elaborate or provide more detail. If you think that the guest is not answering the question or is

straying off topic then you can interject but keep in mind that your listeners may well want to hear what your guest has to say.

8. Control the interview by keeping to the agreed questions and not allowing the guest to dwell on one answer for too long (unless you feel your listeners will want to hear it). Always be polite, respectful and professional in your responses.
9. At the end of the interview, thank the guest for their time and (if appropriate) review what you were talking about (e.g. promoting their new book etc.)

Industry Tips:

- *Think about what questions your listeners would want to ask your guest.*
- *Consider actually asking your listeners to email you the question they want to hear.*
- *Your first few questions should be fairly friendly, save the difficult questions for later in your interview when your guest is more relaxed.*
- *Don't be combative, your guest will just get defensive and ultimately your interview will fail.*
- *Make sure the guest has access to some water should they need it.*
- *If you think things are getting out of hand or your guest might say something they shouldn't, say that you are out of time and end the interview.*
- *If it is not live then remember that you can always fix mistakes in editing, if you or your guest makes a mistake or wants to answer a question again, leave a short pause and then resume, this will make editing easier.*
- *Relax and have fun with it. It can be a rewarding experience for the presenter, guest and listener.*



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