

# Different Types of Research

## 1. Background Information or Background Interview

Could also be called “research”. This is where you find out enough **basic information** about your topic to construct **logical, thought-provoking questions**. This is the step in the process where you inform yourself about your topic. Pursue answers to questions that you have, don’t just confirm things you already know.

You’re **not** looking for direct quotes, but information that you can use in transitions and the body of your story. For example, how many members; schedule of events; names of advisers; how often do they meet; names of captains, etc.

**Sources:** The people who know the most about your topic – members, participants, coaches, advisers, faculty, administration. Or you can use print sources – student handbook, schedules, brochures, reliable web sites, etc.

Once you have a **complete familiarity** with your topic, **then** you can write interview questions and select possible sources for one-on-one interviews.

## 2. Personal Interview

This is what you most commonly think of as “the interview”. You will be asking questions of a specific source and writing down the responses they give you. The purpose of this interview is to get **interesting, story-telling quotes** which make up the heart of your story.

### **The only way to get good quotes is to ask good questions.**

Begin with basic questions (who, what, where, when why, and how) that are the easiest to answer and put your source at ease.

Once you’ve “warmed them up”, ask them open-ended questions, focusing on their opinions. Remember, people usually love to give you their opinion and most like to talk about themselves. Take advantage of this.

Avoid questions where you can predict the response. Also, avoid the most predictable sources.

As your sources to:

- Give you an example
- Make a comparison
- Give you their philosophy
- Imagine what they would do differently
- Describe an event through their eyes

Before you leave:

- Check the spelling of their name
- Repeat quotes if you’re not clear on them
- Ask if you can contact them in the future
- THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME!

## AVOID OBVIOUS, PREDICTABLE QUOTES:

"I was really excited when I was chosen Homecoming queen," said Sheila Shellshocked.

"The football team was great this year," said Captain Bart Biceps, "even if we didn't win a game."

"We all worked together as a team and became a family," said Senior Sally Smiley.

"Math can be fun," said Math Teacher Mr. Cal Q. Luss, "if you work hard."

## AVOID POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE QUOTES:

"I go to volleyball games because of all the hot chicks in tight spandex shorts," said Senior Danny Drooler.

"The only reason I failed math was because Mr. Luss sucks," said Freshman Farrah F. Failure.

"I heard that the main reason the football team was so bad was because Bart Biceps was whacked out on steroids," said A. Nonymous Student.

### 3. Polls and Surveys

These are used to get the general “feelings” of a certain group regarding your topic. Again, this information is used to supplement transition paragraphs and to tie together and introduce direct quotes. The information you receive should also be used in constructing your one-on-one interview questions.

#### **Polls –**

- Questions should be easily understood and easy to answer with options to circle and check off.
- Avoid open-ended questions because you are looking for percentages and categories.
- Be sure that your instructions are clear and that questions are not ambiguous.
- To be accurate, you need to poll at least 10% of the group you have selected. The general rule is that you should poll a higher percent if the group is smaller.

#### **How to write out poll results:**

Sixty percent of seniors held full-time jobs during the school year.

Only 15 percent of the faculty said they supported the new ruling.

Never refer to the fact that you handed out a poll!

## **Surveys –**

These are used for a more general feeling and to solicit specific opinions from students.

**Note:** Don't **ever** just take quotes from surveys. Always follow up before quoting someone directly.

Again, questions should be clear, but can be open-ended, giving the person a chance to elaborate on their response or choice.

For example: "How do you feel about the proposed student dress code?"

Because responses take more time and thought, have fewer questions.

If you want to find people with quotes, make sure you leave a blank for their name (usually optional).

### **How to write out survey results:**

The majority of the 40 juniors surveyed liked the new block system, with most recognizing the positive aspects of "more time in class" and "less homework."