

# Story Planning Worksheet

In ONE sentence what is this story about?

Who are the players involved in this story?

Who has something to win or lose?

Who do I need to interview for this story?

What are some important questions that I need to ask?

What kind of sounds could I record for this story?

Describe 3 Possible Scenes:

# Recording and Interviewing Basics

**Microphone Placement:**

*Get in close!*

* The mic should be about 4-5 inches from the subject’s mouth
* Just under the chin – so that they forget it’s there
* Hold it at a slight angle, and not so close that you get “P-Pops”

**Wear your Headphones!!**

* Headphones aren’t dorky, they’re professional. ALWAYS wear your headphones. Really- we mean it. You need to hear what’s going on with your recording!

**Avoid Unwanted Noises**

* Make sure your microphone is plugged in tightly and that the cords are not bouncing around –all of this will add screechy noises to your recording.

**Listen:**

* Listen through your headphones for fans, hums, radios, buzzes and jackhammers in the background.
* Whenever possible, avoid these situations
  + Change location, close a window, turn off the radio/TV, etc.
  + Noises like this make it extremely difficult to edit. You’ll thank yourself later.

**Be careful:**

* Be careful when you’re holding the microphone. Sometimes hand movement can make a yucky sound on your tape.
* Be very still, and try to shift position when the interviewee is not speaking.
* Also- never hand the mic over. You are the reporter, it’s your job to hold the mic.

**Record Sounds to Help Tell your Story!**

* Good sound and lots of it! – makes the difference between a blah story and a great story.
* Record ACTION SOUNDS and PICTURE SOUNDS close up. We call these SCENES.
  + Are you talking to someone while they’re cooking?
    - Record the bacon sizzling in the pan.
  + Are you interviewing someone about his job as a mechanic?
    - We want to hear wrenches twisting screws.
  + Are you recording yourself on a journey?
    - Get a clean recording of the bus pulling away.
  + *We cannot emphasize this enough! You will need these sounds for transitions and emphasis to help tell your story!!!*

**Get Background Sound:**

* Make sure your record AT LEAST TWO MINUTES of “silence” in EVERY LOCATION that you record. You will seed this ambient sound to edit. You’ll thank yourself. (Thank you, Self!)

**Slating the Tape:**

* Always begin every recording yourself saying who you are, where you are, what time it is, who you’re interviewing. This tape helps us set the scene and we often use it in the story.
* Keep an Eye on Your Machine!
  + Keep an eye on your LEVELS – make sure your recording isn’t too high or too low.
  + What you hear in your headphone is the VOLUME, NOT the LEVELS …you’ll only know how high or low your levels are by looking at the screen on your recorder.
  + *And…every so often, double check to make sure that you’re still recording!*

**Getting A Good Interview:**

* **Be Prepared**
* **Be Yourself**
* **LISTEN**
* **Be Courageous**
* **Be a Detective**
  + Be open to possibilities, but prepare questions before you begin.
  + Don’t be afraid to get close!
  + Stay in control of the situation.
  + Introduce yourself.
  + Always get the interviewee’s name, age (and contact info, if you can).
  + Don’t be afraid to ask someone to repeat something.
  + Ask open-ended questions. Avoid Yes-or-No questions-- they lead to boring answers.
  + Ask for explanations/ follow-up questions.
  + Don’t talk over your interviewee. Let them finish completely before you jump in with the next question.
  + DON’T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE.
  + Don’t be afraid to ask a question several different ways if you’re not getting a good answer.

**At the end of an interview always ask:**

“Is there anything I haven’t asked you that you’d like to say?”

“Do you know anyone else you think I should talk to?”

*Leave the recorder on until you’ve completely walked away. Amazing things happen as soon as the “official” interview is over. You don’t want to miss them!*

**When You’re Recording:**

* What is the focus of my story?
* What does it feel like to be this person I’m interviewing?
* How can I capture the essence of this person or place?
* What does this place look like? Smell like? Sound like?
* How do I feel right now? Am I nervous? Uncomfortable? Brave? Hot or cold?
* What obstacles am I encountering? How do I get around them?
* Is there any sound that I should record close-up?
* Do I have enough ambience?