Know Before you Interview: Best Practices & Interview Scheduling

An interview is a conversation with a purpose: gathering information to help you build your project. You can conduct an interview virtually, on the phone, or in person. The tips below will help you prepare to conduct a successful interview.

Assigning Roles
Usually, one or two team members participate in each community resource interview. Each team member participating in the conversation should be familiar with the step-by-step interview plan so the process goes smoothly. Below is a checklist of typical roles played by individuals in an interview. If you are conducting the interview alone, you will be responsible for each item.

- Who will extend the interview invite (by phone or email)?
- Who opens the conversation?
- When introducing yourselves, who will speak first, second, etc?
- Who asks which questions?
- Who takes notes?
- Who handles the tech set-up if you interview virtually?
- Who delivers the “Thank You” email/message?

Interview Invitations
When you ask to interview someone, you ask for some of their valuable time. Most people receive many emails or phone calls, which is why it’s important to be clear, concise, and polite in your request. If you do not receive a reply right away, sending a follow-up in three business days is appropriate. In today’s busy environment, it can be a challenge to get someone on the phone. Chances are you will leave a voicemail. Regardless of whether you send an email or leave a voicemail, there are several elements to include in your invitation:

- Your introduction
- Project elevator pitch
- The Ask (what you want from them- a brief interview- remember to define what “Brief” means! Ex. Do you only need 15 minutes? 30?)
- Availability (the best times to reach you)
- How you can be reached (email, phone)

Once you have received an email or phone reply, you will provide a confirmation message to “confirm” you have received the message and the date and time. If it’s a virtual meeting, in your confirmation email you will include a link to the meeting. Several email templates and phone scripts are located in Appendix B below, including “follow-up” and “confirmation” messages.

Appendix B: Interview Request Templates & Scripts

EMAIL: Interview Request Template

To:
Cc: (if you are interviewing with a team member, put their email in the "Cc")
Subject: Interview Request: World Affairs Challenge
Hello (insert person's first and last name)
We're/ I'm from _____ (school or location), and we're/ I'm participating in the World Affairs Challenge Program this year. We're focused on learning about _____(problem) in _____(place). We know that talking to people like you is one of the most important ways for us to truly understand this issue and what's already being done to try to solve it. Our goal is to understand this problem more deeply and propose our own creative solution. Ultimately, we want to do something tangible to help solve this problem.
Would you be available for a brief discussion by phone or virtual meeting on one of these dates and times? (provide at least three dates and times you will be available for them to choose from)
If more than one student is doing the interview, then add:
My team mate(s), _____ (Student Name(s)) will also attend this meeting.
Thank you very much for your time.
Respectfully,
Your Name (add pronouns)
World Affairs Challenge Program

EMAIL: Interview Confirmation Template

To:
Cc: (if you are interviewing with team members, put their email in the "Cc")
Subject: Interview Confirmation: World Affairs Challenge Program
Hi (First Name Last Name),
Thank you for your reply. We're / I'm excited to speak with you on (insert date and time).
If the interview is by phone, use: **We/I will contact you at the telephone number you provided.**
If by virtual meeting that your facilitator helps to set-up, use: **Here is a link to the virtual meeting:**
If the community resource provides a link to a virtual meeting they set-up, use: We/I will log into the virtual meeting you provided.
Respectfully,
Your Name (add pronouns)
World Affairs Challenge Program

EMAIL: Interview Request Follow-Up Template

If you do not receive a reply within three business days, sending a follow-up is appropriate.
To:
Cc: (if you are interviewing with team members, put their email in the "Cc")
Subject: Interview Request: World Affairs Challenge Program
Hello (insert person's first and last name),
You probably receive many emails, so we're/I'm following up to see if you might have some time to talk. Please let us/me know if you're too busy or if there's someone else we/I should reach out to for this information instead.
Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
Your Name (add pronouns)
World Affairs Challenge Program
As a refresher, here is the original message:
(Insert your original message here unless it is automatically copied from your first email)

VOICEMAIL: Interview Request Script

When calling a person or an office, you will likely reach a voicemail (or be transferred to their voicemail). So practice saying the script a few times for confidence. Make sure to leave your phone number so you will receive a return call.
Hello,
I'm trying to connect with_____ (person's first and last name). I'm _____ (your name) from _____ (school or location), and I'm participating in the World Affairs Challenge Program this year. We're focused on learning about _____(problem) in _____(place). We know that talking to people like you is one of the most important ways for us to truly understand this issue and what's already being done to try to solve it. Our goal is to understand this problem more deeply and propose our own creative solution. Ultimately, we want to do something tangible to help solve this problem.
Would you be willing to speak with me briefly about our project? I'd like to set up a call or virtual meeting with you as soon as possible as our project has a short deadline. You can reach me by email at _____ or by phone at _____. I look forward to hearing from you.

LIVE CALL: Interview Request Script

If a person answers the call, after saying hello and introducing yourself, always state who you are trying to reach.
Hello,
I'm trying to reach _____ (person's first and last name) for a community resource interview. I'm _____ (your name) from _____ (school or location), and I'm participating in the World Affairs Challenge Program this year.
Once it is confirmed you are speaking with the right person, always ask if it is a good time to talk: **"Is this a good time for you to chat briefly?"**
I'd like to schedule 30 minutes of your time for an interview. My team is focused on learning about _____(problem) in _____(place). We know that talking to people like you is one of the most important ways for us to truly understand this issue and what's already being done to try to solve it. Our goal is to understand this problem more deeply and propose our own creative solution. Ultimately, we want to do something tangible to help solve this problem. Would you be willing to speak with me ("and one of my teammates," if applicable) for about half an hour? *(If they agree to meet with you, proceed to figure out a mutually convenient day, time, and location [in-person, by phone, or a virtual meeting].)*
Thank you for speaking with me today. May I have your email to send a confirmation? I look forward to talking with you more on [date and time]. If you need to reach me before then, my email is _____ and my phone number is _____. Thank you!

VOICEMAIL: Interview Follow-Up Script

If you do not receive a reply within three business days, you can call again or leave a follow-up voicemail.
Hello (person's first and last name),

This is _____ (your name) from _____ (school or location), and I'm participating in the World Affairs Challenge Program. You probably receive many phone calls, so I'm following up to see if you might have 30 minutes to talk. If you are willing to speak with me (and my teammate) about our project, I'd like to set up a call or virtual meeting with you as soon as possible as our project has a short deadline. You can reach me by email at _____ and my phone number is _____.

Please let me know if you're too busy or if there's someone else you recommend I reach out to for this information instead. Thank you!

LIVE CALL: Interview Request Follow-Up Script

If a person answers the call, after saying hello and introducing yourself, always state who you are trying to reach. Once it is confirmed you are speaking with the right person (or someone that can take a message to give to the right person), proceed with more details.
Hello,
I'm trying to reach _____ (person's name). I _____(called/ left a voice message/sent an email) a few days ago and I'm following up. I'm _____ (your name) from _____ (school or location), and I'm participating in the World Affairs Challenge Program this year. I'd like to schedule a brief interview.
If you are speaking to the person you wanted to reach, use this script:
Would you be available for a brief discussion by phone or virtual meeting on _____ (double-check the dates! Provide at least three dates, and times you will be available)
Thank you. May I have your email to send a _____ (confirmation / virtual meeting link)? I look forward to talking with you more on [date and time]. Bye!
If you are leaving a message with someone, use this script:
Do you know how I can reach _____ (person's name)? Or Would you be able to let _____ (person's name) know that I called and give them my phone number and email? Thank you! Bye!

References and Additional Resources

- **Community Tool Box, University of Kansas: https://ctb.ku.edu/en**
- **How to Follow Up with Someone Who's Not Getting Back to You: https://hbr.org/2021/01/how-to-follow-up-with-someone-whos-not-getting-back-to-you**
- **How to Introduce Yourself in an Email (With Examples): https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-introduce-yourself-in-an-email-2062812**
- **Perfect Pitch: How to Nail Your Elevator Speech: https://www.themuse.com/advice/perfect-pitch-how-to-nail-your-elevator-speech**