Youth News Method, Handbook & Ethics

Inform - Connect - Inspire - Activate

Contents

Youth News

This document is an official guideline for journalists and other media professionals working with children and minors, set up by The Youth News Foundation, together with journalists, news organisations, pedagogues and other youth specialists. The document concludes more than 25 years of experience in youth journalism, originated in 2004, completed in 2015 and updated ever since. This document is focused on the Youth News Europe initiative.

More than half of the worlds population is younger than 25 years old. It's the largest generation of youth in history. The world needs to hear their story. We need to hear their story. And we need to let them know their story matters. Journalists should involve children and teenagers in their productions. Of course only when its done in a proper way. More than working with adults, every decision of a journalist has to be cautious, well-considered and deliberate.

The most important rule:

The child's interest always comes first.

Children and teenagers look at the world from a different perspective than adults. Not only because of their length, mostly because they are open-minded, positive and uncomplicated. Their views, their opinions, their unique thoughts make a difference.

The Youth News Foundation (YNF) is an independent, international journalism organisation making the voice of young people heard in as many countries and places as possible. The YNF is a nonprofit and non governmental organisation based in The Netherlands. The foundation has a ten year track record of professional youth journalism. As such it is unique in Europe, and the world. The YNF was founded by journalist Tako Rietveld. Before he worked for almost fifteen years as a reporter and presenter for the Dutch children's news.

The Dutch Children's News was launched in 1981. Together with BBC's newshound it was one of the first news programmes for children in the world. It still is a unique program, with unique journalist, having a unique experience. The originators were confronted with much skepticism in the beginning: "Do we really have to bother children with news, shouldn't they just be able to play and be carefree?"

Children are exposed all day to news through all sorts of channels. First of all via social media. At home there's a continuous news flow through television, radio and newspaper. After almost

forty-five years, the program has proved it's right to exist. On TV and online. It also set a standard for other youth news programmes and helped set up many other programmes and newsrooms, teaching journalists how to work with children.

Tako's tips:

- Take children and young people seriously
- Let them tell their story
- Listen and ask questions

What does it bring to adults?

- New perspective
- Fresh insights
- Inspiration

What does it bring to children?

- Self-confidence
- Learning to put thoughts and feelings into words
- Learn to argue and discuss better

Make sure you question every decision you make. Why this topic? Why these children? Why this question? If there is the slightest doubt about a decision, the answer is: no / don't.

Selecting news

Selecting news is an independent, journalistic process, always led by an experienced editor in chief. Lots of topics will be put on our longlist and discussed. Capacity and budget will force us to make sharp choices. Every decision, whether a topic turns out to be a report or not, has to be well considered and substantiated. Choices always have to be explained to partners, children involved and other parties.

The editorial staff of The Youth News Foundation starts every week with a meeting. The editor in chief collects topics suitable for that weeks broadcasts. Input comes from youth correspondents, the rest of the team, partners and children. With some topics it's immediately clear; they are perfect for platform. So during the meeting, we don't talk about if we are going to do this, but how we are going to do it. The strategy. Are we going to ask children for their opinions, are we going to interview an expert, do we need to explain this topic?

It's not always that easy. There are also topics that lead to heated discussions. Should we do it or not? Every item and post will be discussed, looked into and weighed. This is something we always did and will do. Topics to put on the longlist are:

- News that everyone is talking about, all the media is full of it
- News that needs to be explained
- News with consequences for children
- News about children
- News of general interest
- News that involves the EU
- News that involves one of the partnered countries
- Positive / inspiring news
- News that children themselves bring up

We also take into consideration that there has to be a balance in the topics we choose to elaborate. We make sure there is diversity. Alternate world news and children's news, long reports and short posts, light topics and serious ones. Also the different European countries and backgrounds have to be payed attention to.

Also we strive to always include a positive element or subject. A happy ending. Ultimately, a lot of good things happen in the world too. We want children to feel comfortable when they see our content.

The journalistic antennae of the youth news editors are not only focused on world news, but especially on children's news and a child's perspective. It has become second nature. Whatever you encounter, quickly ask yourself a few questions:

- Are there children involved?
- What do children notice about this development?
- What are the consequences for children?
- What are the children's opinions about this topic?
- Which questions will children have?
- Which fears do children have?

The answers to these questions help when choosing topics for our platform and in determining the perspective.

News for children and a child's perspective

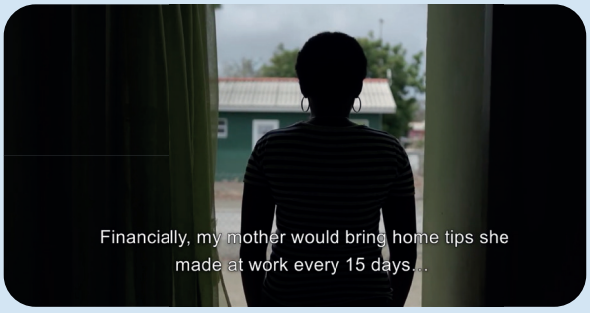
The target group of the Youth News Europe initiative consists of children between the ages of 8 and 18 years old. We will focus on the group of 10 and 12 years old. This age group is under-represented in having their voices heard, as research shows. When writing texts and selecting topics, we take into account the knowledge and the world of experience of children in this age category.

Ethical rules for journalists:

- The interests of the child always come first
  - Always ask permission from an adult before talking with children
  - Never ever speak to children alone. Always have other people present.
- Special care and restraint are required
- Consult with the child and adults in his or her environment on sensitive topics

Always ask yourself the following questions:

- What does the interview bring to the reader/viewer and the child himself?
- What could be the consequences?
- What reactions can the child receive from his environment?
- Will the child notice anything?
- Would the child be able or dare to tell his or her story personally to everyone sitting in front of the television or reading the interview?
- Could the publication have consequences in five or ten years?



How do you convey intense news to children? It's something journalists often struggle with. Here are a few secret recipes from the youth correspondent's cookbook.

1. Think of a niece or nephew and tell the news as you would tell him or her. Make short sentences. Children do that too. Don't use difficult words or explain them. Choose active language.
2. Be careful with expressions, children take them literally. So think twice before you say that 'the bullet has been decided' or that 'dark clouds are gathering'.
3. Be careful with numbers. If you use them, make it understandable. If 90 percent of children have a smartphone, it would be better to say that nine out of ten children have a smartphone. If 10 hectares of forest were burned, that would be twenty football fields.
4. Write surprising and catchy sentences. Not: 'Today the Nobel Prize was awarded to Malala in Oslo. She is the first child to receive the prize.' Well: 'For the first time in history, a child received the Nobel Peace Prize today.'
5. If you make a video and use subtitles, make short and clear sentences and make sure that the text is on screen long enough. An adult reads about twice as fast as a child. So read a sentence twice so you know whether it is on screen long enough.
6. Humor is allowed and important. A joke in between should be possible. It keeps the reader/viewer engaged and ensures that they remember more.
7. There are no taboos, but there are thresholds. You can talk about anything, but some topics are further removed from children, such as politics or economics. Violent news has a higher threshold: abuse, murder, war. Also warn about shocking news: "It's a bad story." "Some children may be frightened by the images."
8. For the TV makers among us: make sure that text and image match well. Don't literally tell what you already see, but add something. The less you say, the more remains. So make sharp choices. In television, viewers remember 80 percent of the image and 20 percent of the text. Keep that in mind. Don't use distracting images. Most children turn their heads away when they see blood and needles. Many adults too, by the way. Then you have lost most of the viewers. The text sticks better with calm images. In principle, you don't show dead people. You should also be careful with dead animals in children. They hate to see that and there is a good chance that they will zap away. Sound can also have an impact. Think of cries for help or crying fits.
9. Just like parents, journalists also need to reassure children about difficult topics. Emphasize how exceptional a disaster or attack is. Children who speak ensure recognizability. It helps when children hear how peers express their emotions.
10. Always start with the current news, that's what children want to know first. Then offer perspective from the past and end with the future. End with something positive. For example, about assistance or actions.

Making a news item at your desk

We will also explain some news events to children. Children have a limited amount of foreknowledge. If there is a report on the violence in Ukraine, then we also explain the history of the conflict. On a map you will see where this area is located relative to other European countries. Explanations like this are also a vital part of items about the United Nations, earthquakes, economical developement, elections, the birth of a new crown princess, the biggest dinosaur bone ever found, animal testing, etc.

We will spend a lot of time and effort on this. Take the following points into consideration when you are working on such an topic:

- Each item should contain at least the following six elements:
  - who
  - what
  - where
  - when
  - why
  - how
- Order events in time according to: the present, the past and the future.
- Make sure that your use of language relates to the target group. Don't use big words but don't be too childish either. Speak about parents as mothers and fathers instead of mommies and daddies.
- Limit the information you want to deal with in a topic. Choose a point of view and stick to it. Accept the fact that you can't explain everything. The target group cannot assimilate a large amount of information at once.
- Consider which questions children will have and try to answer them in your item.
- Look at how children are affected by an event and include this in your item.
- Try to visualize as much as possible. Use maps, for example, to show where a country is located relative to your homeland. When you are making an explanatory block, try to see what your possibilities are. Consider computer animations, a cartoon, illustrations that depict the situation, etc.
- When you explain a topic, compare the situation with one that corresponds to a child's world of experience. For example, draw a

comparison between the government and the board of education, and compare the community to the class.

- Keep the text and images closely related without literally describing what you see. If the text and images are too far removed from each other, the audience can't assimilate the information.
- If you still want to use footage that could be distracting, create a separate slot for it in the item and/or announce it separately.
- Conclude a report with optimistism. When there's a huge disaster, explain that there are rescue teams on their way to help the victims and concerning diseases, make it known that doctors are doing research to find a cure.
- Making such explanatory news items needs practice and you learn that for the most part by doing it often. Still, there are some tips to be given that will help make writing easier:
- Look at the available footage before you choose an approach. It might help to give you ideas.
- Structure the information. What belongs together, what's the most important news and what goes too far to be dealt with in The Children's News?
- If your information is not complete or if some issues are not clear, consult an expert.
- Are you still stuck? It helps to summarize the story if you tell it out loud, off the top of your head, to yourself or to a colleague. This often helps to get the picture.
- Think ahead about which concepts and developments you want to explain thoroughly and which you do not.

It's seldom that an item for The Children's News is complete. It becomes too complicated and disorganized if all the nuances for grown-ups are offered in your report. That makes working for The Children's News complex. As a journalist, you would really like to relate everything. Accept the fact that you can't always do this and remember that there will always be another new broadcast in which you will be able to to highlight another element regarding the same story.

Language

Children always speak in their own language. Whether it is English, Spanish, Greek, Dutch, French or Romanian.

As a journalist its important to use the language children understand. Make sure that your use of language during the broadcast is appropriate for the children in the target group. It can be very useful to pay a visit to a school without your camera. Talk to children about the program and about news. Show them a questionnaire with difficult words and concepts. You will immediately notice which level they are on, which words you can use without problems and what you will need to explain. Some more tips:

- Use spoken language rather than written language. Ultimately your text is not for a newspaper article; it has to be recited by the presenter.
- Keep your sentences short. If you do have a long one, divide it into two shorter sentences.
- Try to avoid using popular words. Our experience is that children think it's really stupid when adults say "phat" or "cool". You'll run the risk of appearing hopelessly old-fashioned because children change their language trends quickly.
- Don't be too childish. Don't use baby-talk. Diminutives like kiddies or doggies are not appropriate for the target group.

Try reading children's books and magazines to stay up to date. It's also a good idea to watch other television programmes for children to listen to the choice of words they use.

Preparing a report

A reporter and camera crew can't go on the road if the item they are going to make is not well prepared. Before a reporter goes anywhere to make an item, the planner does the research. Most will be done by email and telephone:

- Make calls to all the people involved with the subjects. Get in touch for detailed information and to make appointments.
- Be critical during the preliminary telephone conversations. Many people would really like to appear in an item and they'll make their story sound better than it is. So keep asking questions: "Is there really a problem? What is there exactly to be seen?" Perhaps they can email a photograph of the situation. "How many children are involved? How old are they and what is their role? Will they be present when we come to report?"
- Be aware of the other side of a story. If a farmer tells you that it's extremely unusual that his sheep gave birth to sextuplets, check with authorities to see if it really is unique. If a school is in dispute with the municipality and is planning to protest, don't just listen to the school principal but talk to the alderman as well. After these telephone conversations, decide which parties you are going to interview for your report.
- When covering a topic, if there's a large group of children involved, for example a class, don't plan too many interviews. Generally the reporter will decide on location which children to interview and which children will not be interviewed. Make it clear during your telephone conversations that it's not possible to film everyone. This should prevent disappointment and unnecessary discussions on the spot.
- Children must be definitely involved with a topic if they want to play a leading role in your coverage. A child that "knows a little bit about" or "has maybe heard something about" your subject is not suitable.
- Always ask parents or accompanying adults first if you can speak to children. And always have them present at the concersation. Never have a one-on-one call with a child. Children that do have a leading role must be able to carry the subject. Always ask them questions in advance on the telephone or a video call. This way you can discern how communicative they are and if they are actually involved with the subject. Don't rely on the judgement of parents or teachers.

- Find out beforehand if there are special permissions needed to film locations or interview children or adults. If that's the case, arrange to obtain that permission so that the reporter can get to work immediately on location.
- It's important that the adults expressing their views in the item do this in a captivating way which will appeal to children. Instead of talking to the public relations manager or the managing director of the zoo about a sick elephant, interview the person who takes care of the animals.
- Sometimes you'll need permission to film from someone other than your contact person. Find out who that is and arrange it.
- Arrange with your contact person that he or she will meet and accompany the crew.
- Find out if you need archive material, film footage, video clips or attributes for the item and make sure you have this ready for the reporter.

All the information the planner has gathered is fact-checked and put on a call sheet for the reporter. He/she must be able to trust that everything is correct. This is the foundation of your news report.

Most reports and other content will be clear and relatively easy to prepare. Sometimes there are delicate subjects, when speaking about minorities or abuse. A youth professional always has to be involved in preparing these delicate items.

Tips for a good call sheet:

- It has to be clear what time the reporter and the camera crew are expected and at which address.
- Write a short summary about the story at the top of the sheet so the reporter can see at a glance what it's about.
- During the editor's meeting, a certain point of view has been chosen. Make a note of this on the sheet. It's important that the reporter is aware of this.
- Decide, together with the editor in chief, how long the item can be and note the length on the sheet. An item lasting 5 minutes needs more material than one lasting only 80 seconds.
- Write down all relevant telephone numbers and addresses. Make sure it's clear who the contact person is for each segment of the item.

- Limit the amount of background information. Don't copy press releases, telexes or internet pages indiscriminately.
- Let it be known if there have been problems during the preparations; they often reappear on location. Do be tactful as call sheets are sometimes left lying around. It's not to your advantage if an author of children's books, who after much insistence finally consents to work together with you on a report, gets to read that he's a moody old bugger.

Good preparatory work and a complete call sheet are essential for a successful item. It's not always easy to arrange everything the way you want it. People don't answer the phone or they don't want to be helpful. On the other hand, they can be all too enthusiastic and they'll try to make the situation seem much more interesting than it is. It's up to the planner to deal with these difficulties so that the reporter can do the work on location without any problems.

On location

A professional youth reporter will go to the different locations with an experienced cameracrew that worked with children many times before as well.

After reading the call sheet, it's a good idea to make a list of which shots and which quotes are essential to tell the story. Then you won't encounter problems later when you are in the editing phase.

Be flexible on location. Dare to let go off your plan. The situation could turn out to be just a little different that you thought and things can happen unexpectedly.

- Talk to the camera crew before you get started. Inform them about what you intend to do, how you want to report the story and listen to the crew's suggestions.
- When you arrive, introduce yourself to the people. Children first. Explain what you're going to do and try to make everyone feel comfortable. Don't walk in with the camera running.
- To prevent disappointed and angry reactions afterwards, it's very important that the people involved understand that not everything that is filmed can actually be broadcasted. The length of your report is limited and a lot of material gets trashed in the edit. You won't see everyone back in the broadcast.
- Make clear to everyone involved what your role is. You are helping the children to tell their stories. They can share and show everything they like. You have to be open to their ideas and tips. Ultimately you are the

one who is responsible for what happens on location and what will be broadcasted.

- Don't hesitate to ask people to repeat something you are recording. Maybe the cameraman wasn't quite ready, or you would like to have the same shot from another angle. The same action filmed in different ways provides many advantages when you are editing.
- Do be careful that it doesn't turn into a theatre production. It is a news program, thus you are recording a current event. If you do choose to enact a scene, then it should have a function which is obvious to the audience.
- Keep an eye on the time, after all, it is limited. When you get back, you still have to spot and edit your material. The more material you have, the more time you will need. So don't shoot everything; it's not as if you're making a full length movie.
- Make an introductory shot of the people you are interviewing. For example: an expert reading files at his desk or a teacher standing in front of the class. An introductory shot can be used to show what someone's function is and why you have chosen them to express their views in your report.

On location you're often working under the pressure of a deadline and you have to deal with many different people. It's intense, but at the same time it can be a lot of fun. You see places you might have never seen and you are carried from one extreme to another. One moment you are at a school watching grade 8's farewell musical and the next you are walking amongst cow-boys at a rodeo and then again you find yourself listening to the emotional story about a boy whose home has been destroyed by a huge explosion.

Interviewing children

An important part of reporting is the interviewing of both children and adults. You get nervous people in front of the camera who are generally not accustomed to dealing with the media. Make them feel at ease, explain that everything can be done over again and that there are no wrong answers.

Every child is different and every situation is different. There is therefore no fixed recipe for a good conversation with children and young people. It remains custom work. However, there are tools to make a conversation run more smoothly. Not just for journalists, but for all adults. Most 'grown-ups' behave dramatically differently towards children and young people than when they speak to other adults.

It is especially important to treat children equally. If you literally sit on your your knees, you end up at the same level in all respects. A standing adult looks down on children and forces children to look up at him. If you are at the same height, that inequality disappears. This will make a child feel more at ease and will therefore speak more smoothly.

Interviewing children

Interviewing children is a special discipline. The keyword is: patience. Take your time, even if you don't have it. Never forget that although it's your daily work, for the child you are interviewing it's a very exceptional experience.

You can interview children in different roles.
- **The child as protagonist:** he or she tells what he or she has experienced.
- **The child as witness:** he tells what he himself has seen.
- **The child as an expert:** he shares insights and opinions.

An interview with children or young people is often difficult and uncomfortable. Very annoying, both for the child and the adult. You can remove that friction through good preparation and clear, honest communication on an equal level. Think carefully in advance about what you want to discuss and where you will do it.

Realise that as an adult or journalist you have responsibility for the child. If a girl tells you at her home that she is being bullied at school, giving the name and surname of the bullies, this can have dire consequences if it actually appears that way in the newspaper or on television. If

a boy confesses in class that his parents are always fighting and throwing dishes, you have to wonder whether that is suitable for publication.

As a journalist, you have to introduce yourself thoroughly. We all know the basic rules of a first impression. Appropriate clothing, being clear and showing interest in the other person. This also applies to children. If you arrive at a primary school wearing a suit and tie, children immediately see you as an official gentleman. If you deliberately wear your most colourful outfit and hippest shoes, you will fit in with the children, but there is a risk that they will not take you seriously. So be sure to wear something that suits you. “Own it” is the basic rule.

Children sense better than anyone whether you are sincere. There should be no difference between what you say and what you think. Children are much more sensitive than adults, they use all their senses and they are therefore on high alert. Senses, by the way, that most adults have long forgotten they have. A baby who cannot speak and does not understand what an adult says usually knows what is meant, purely by using other senses and instincts. You also notice it, for example, in an asylum seeker center, or more generally during holidays abroad. Children from different countries, with different backgrounds and native languages, can usually play and communicate well with each other, while their parents have great difficulty understanding each other. In addition to what you say, a child also senses perfectly what you mean through your intonation, posture and other signals. The older children get, the less they use these other senses. The more sincere the adult, the better the conversation will go.

It is also important during an introduction to give the children a role and to involve them. Including by letting them ask you questions. About the interview you want to conduct, about your work, and sometimes also about very personal things.

There are three advantages letting the children ask questions themselves. One: it shows children that you take them seriously. Two: it creates a bond and builds trust. Three: you immediately notice which children like to speak up and which prefer to keep their mouths shut. This does not necessarily mean that only the speech bubbles have to be in front of the camera or microphone. Quieter children often have the best stories to tell and can formulate the sharpest answers.

Children also want to know what awaits them. They know this during a conversation at home, but not with professionals. It is therefore important that a reporter or journalist explains in a short step-by-step plan what will happen. After I have introduced myself, I always give the following explanation in a class: ‘We are going to have a nice chat first, you can ask questions. Then I interview a few children on camera. We are going to talk about topic Do you understand that?!” Fortunately, the answer is usually a resounding yes. ‘So I choose a few boys and girls

that we are going to film. We also film the entire class, so that you are all in the picture. Is that okay?' This is also the moment when I check whether there are children who would rather not be filmed or interviewed.

Keep in mind that children are sometimes inclined to give socially desirable answers. In that case, they mainly give answers that they think will score well with adults. Therefore, help the child to understand what the conversation is intended for, that it is about his or her own opinion. As an adult you quickly assume that a child knows why you ask all those questions, but that is not the case. Therefore, emphasise to children that no answer can be 'wrong'. "Everything you say is good. I ask for your opinion and it can never be wrong. Your opinions may also differ from each other. What one person likes, another finds stupid. That's not bad at all and actually good. It would be strange if we all thought the same."

As mentioned earlier, it is wise to have a conversation with a child at the same level. If you sit down and talk up to a standing adult, it feels awkward. This is also why presidents, managers and other 'important people' give their speeches from a dais. Not only because they are clearly visible, but especially because everyone automatically looks up to them. Children almost always have that feeling.

It's all about taking each other seriously. Children see themselves as a 'big' child by default. They are also bigger, better and smarter than the year or even the month before. More than once a seven-year-old says to me: 'I used to when I was little...' or 'I'm really too big for that now, that's for little children'. The more seriously you take the child, the more seriously you ask your questions, the more serious the answers are.

During the interview, make sure that you let the child tell the story themselves. The more you 'control' as an adult, the less a child will say. Ask open questions, is the well-known advice. So questions that children can answer in all directions. 'Do you think the weather is nice?' is a closed question. A child will answer 'yes' or 'no' and will probably not tell more on his or her own. 'What do you think of the weather?' is therefore a better question, although this can still have a short answer. "Tell me what you think about the weather" will probably get the best answer.

Listening is the most important thing. I never ask my questions from a piece of paper. You know what you are going to talk about, so you don't need a cheat sheet. If you listen carefully to an answer, the next question will automatically arise. The best often comes when you ask questions. 'Why do you think that' or what exactly do you mean'. My favorite questions are: 'explain'

and ‘tell...’ Guaranteed success with a detailed answer. ‘Was it what you expected?’ always gives reason to tell a story. Because what did you expect, why was it different and how did that happen? Listening also involves silence.

In a nutshell:

1. The preparation

- Who am I going to speak to?
- What do I want to know?
- Where am I going to have the conversation? Why there?
- Why with this child or this group of children?

2. The preliminary interview

- Introduce yourself: say who you are, what you are doing, how the conversation will work.
- If you speak to an entire group about a certain topic, briefly gauge what they know about it.
- Explain what happens with the interview: will it appear on TV, in the newspaper, on a website, in a book?
- Check whether there are children who do not want to be in the picture.
- Put the child at ease, make it clear that there are no wrong answers.
- Explain that the children do not necessarily have to answer every question.
- If necessary, give an example of how they can answer, to avoid short answers.
- Check with the child if he or she has any questions.

3. The interview

- Most importantly: take children seriously. They are not ‘babies’ or ‘kids’.
- Sit or stand at the same height, so that you are literally on the same ‘level’.
- Ask serious questions and you will get serious answers.
- Ask open questions, better not closed yes/no questions.
- Let the child tell the story himself. Don’t start steering or putting words in your mouth. Let the child fill in the silences themselves.

- Dare to ask questions. ‘Explain’ or ‘Tell me...’
- Do not ask more than one question at a time.
- Don’t judge or condemn, listen and confirm by nodding, smiling or looking surprised.
- Repeat the answer and ask if you understood it correctly.
- Be surprised.

4. Wrap up the conversation

- Don’t make the conversation too long. Maximum fifteen minutes.
- Ask if the child would like to add anything.
- Tell us (again) what happens next.
- Check whether the child has any questions.

The bulletpoints:

- Show that you take children seriously and that you are genuinely interested in what they have to say.
- Explain what you’ve come to do, how you’re going to do it and what the interview is about.
- Ask open questions: how, why, what? etc. This will prevent simple “yes” and “no” answers which lead to unusable quotes.
- When formulating questions, take into account which level the children are on.
- Don’t ask complicated questions that need a lot of background knowledge. Children are usually fairly limited in that respect and one such question can upset the rest of the interview.
- Ask one question at a time. Not: “Did you hear that they found Saddam Hussein this morning, weren’t you shocked and how should he be punished?” Chances are that you’ll only get an answer to the last question. It’s better if you ask three separate questions.
- Pay compliments, both during the interview and afterwards.
- Ask adults, such as teachers or parents, to leave when you are interviewing children.They are inclined to prompt an answer to the child which frustrates the whole interview. Moreover, a child usually doesn’t feel free to talk in the presence of an adult.

Interviewing adults for youth

Many adults are extremely nervous about being interviewed by The Children's News. They are afraid that they won't be able to find the right tone. Help them and correct them where necessary. In the end they will only be too happy that you do so. They want to be at their best for their appearance on television:

- The same counts for adults. Ask open questions, one at a time.
- Help them to find the right tone and choice of words. Suggest, for example, that they keep their daughter, son, younger brother or student in mind when answering a question.
- If an answer is getting too complicated, intervene. Search together for synonyms or another form of expression, and then ask the question again.
- Take into account that the answers shouldn't be too long. Approximately 20 seconds is more than enough for one quote.
- Ask them to clarify answers with examples.
- Ask children's questions. Ask yourself what the audience wants to know about this subject. What could surprise them, or move them?
- Experts tend to want to expand on a topic. This often makes the subject more difficult to understand. Emphasise the importance of a suitable explanation for children. One argument to help convince the interviewee, is that a contribution to The Children's News brings admiration and respect from other adults.

When conducting an interview for The Children's News, it's not only important that the reporter asks the right questions, it's just as important that he/she listens properly to the answers. Make sure that the answers you receive from the people you interview are straightforward for children.

Letting children ask their questions

Letting children ask their questions or doing an interview is another branch of sport. It all depends on who you are going to interview and if its going to be one question or a whole interview.

First of all you have to select one, two or three children who will do the interview. Do they represent their class or age group? Are they able to do a video interview? This is a process in itself, explained in other chapters. It is possible to select three children from one class.

Then of course children have to come up with questions. What do they really like to know. Every question is a good question, serious or crazy. It's a lot of fun doing this with the whole class. This way everyone is involved. You will end up with a list of twenty or more questions, that will go from left to right in random order.

For example:

- Were you good at school?
- How old are you?
- When did you have your first kiss?
- What's your biggest achievement?
- Do you have a tattoo?
- What's your advice for young people
- And so on

Then, together with the children, you discuss the importance of the questions. There is no time to ask them all. So you select three, ten of fifteen questions. Which ones are the most important? Which ones really have to be asked. Which ones are appropriate. Of course it has to be a combination of content-related and 'fun' questions. When you can find the answer on google or chat-got, you normally don't have to ask the question.

Finally, together with the children, you put the questions in a logical order. First an introduction question. It's always great to let someone really famous for adults, let's say Oprah Winfrey, introduce herself to children who have no idea who she is.

If you have two children doing the interview, you decide who asks which question and who goes first. You let the children write the questions down, so they are not nervous they forget them. You also explain them they can ask more questions if they don't understand or like the answer. Were you good at school? What topics were best? And worst? Did you ever get suspended?

Then you practice the interview. The children ask their questions and you answer. Take them through the whole process. What is going to happen? You enter an official building, set up the camera's, wait for the prime minister to arrive, you shake hands, say hello, sit dow and start the interview. The moment to really start the interview and ask the first question is usually very difficult for children. Make sure you've got that right to prevent awkward moments. Here you can also practice for them to improvise and ask extra questions. Check if everything is clear and let them ask questions about the process. Ask how they feel. Excited? Nervous? Also ask if you can do anything to help more. After it's time to relax. Play a game, have lunch, hide and seek, just do something else. Make sure the children are comfortable and relaxed when they start the interview.

Rights and regulations

Working with children and minors is always very delicate. The journalist always has to take full responsibility for the child's safety and always has to put their interest first. If in any doubt, at any level, the journalist has to cancel the recordings or broadcast.

Every country has its own rules, regulations and habits working with children and minors. Therefore it's important to always work with local journalists and youth specialists who know how to operate in a specific country.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the European Child Protection Act grants every child the right to freely express an opinion on all matters of interest to the child and to seek assistance from the authorities and the persons to whom the child's protection is entrusted. This means that in principle children may feature in media publications by expressing their opinion on matters that concern them. Featuring children in broadcasts, however, should never put them in any danger to their physical, mental, moral and / or social development, the responsibility for that being on their parents, legal guardians, trustees or other persons who take care of a child, including the directors of family-type small group homes and centres for children without parental care. In any case, if a child features in a media publication, no information and data about the child may be made public without the consent of the child's parents or lawful representatives.

Consent of the child also has be requested by the media professionals, since every child is a rights-bearer and his or her opinion on whether and how to be featured in any media publication should also be taken into consideration.

Other questions that have to be taken into account

- Do we ensure sufficient visibility of the world of children, of their achievements and not only of their problems?
- Have we obtained consent from the adult who takes care of the child (parent or legal guardian)?
- Have we asked the child in a suitable and understandable way how he/she is to be featured in our material?
- Are we convinced that revealing the child's identity will not harm him/her regard- less of the consent obtained from the person responsible for him/her? Responsible media professionals should consider that adults may not be aware what the best interest of the child is.
- Are we sure that our material and the child's presence therein will not create a feeling of shame or discomfort?
- Is it possible that such feelings can appear years later when the child is an adult?
- Are we sure that our material will not be a cause for mockery among the child's peers or for negative treatment on the part of adults?
- Are we sure that the material does not offend the dignity of the child?
- Are we sure that the words we use to refer to the child do not sound patronising or dismissive?
- Can we ask the child what he/she thinks of the words we use to refer to him/her/them?
- Are we convinced that we do not exploit the child in order to make the material more impactful?
- Depending on the age of the child have we though out well if we should address them in a formal or informal manner?
- Are we sure that our material does not create conditions for stigmatisation and isolation of these children from society?
- Is there a purpose to mention that the child is from a certain background, has grown up in a special situation or institution: can that information be omitted without compromising the purpose and meaning of the story?
- Are we convinced that the presence of a child in our material will not

cause negative treatment on the part of the people who take care of him/her?

- Are we sure that we do not mislead the child by arousing unrealistic expectations that we or our media can solve his/her problems? Are we careful about making promises?
- Are we sure that we do not cause or intensify a feeling of being „incomplete“ in the child?
- Do we manage to see and show the individuality beyond the stereotype of the child in an institution as a victim?
- Does our material help for a better understanding of the institutional care system of institutional care?
- Have we made sure that when covering a child with specific needs his/her personality, skills, interests, feelings, etc. do not remain in the background in our material?
- Is it necessary to mention the ethnic origin of the child in view of the topic of the material? Does this pose a danger of discrimination and stigmatisation of entire groups?
- Are we convinced that the language and the contents of the material do not stereotype the child and his/her family on the basis of their ethnic origin?
- Are we sure that we are not prejudiced because of the child’s ethnic origin or religion before we make ourselves familiar with the facts under the case? Does this influence our material?
- Have we checked well enough the sources of information, especially if they come from extremely prejudiced groups, such as nationalistic or racist ones?
- Do we look for balance when covering opinions, including the children’s points of view?
- Do we display due respect, patience and attention to the child?
- Do we always keep in mind that a child is a child and – regardless of ethnicity, religion, social status, origin, etc. ? Every child is entitled to the same rights.

Afterword

Working as a journalist with children and teenagers is challenging, inspiring and impactful. Meeting children, listening to them and looking at the world from their perspective learned me a lot. It shaped my life and purpose. Over those years I met hundreds, maybe thousands of children. Every one of them surprised me, made me laugh or think. The more I talked with them, the more I realised their stories make a difference.

Children dream. They dream big dreams. About a healthy world, without war and poverty. Us adults need to listen to that. Children inspire, surprise, and make us wonder. Isn't that what the world needs? Isn't that what we need?

Best of luck with your great work and let yourself be surprised.

Tako

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