Controversial Issue: CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

A. Choose a person to interview

Think of a person whose skills, knowledge, or experiences seem pertinent to the argument of your speech. Do you know a professional who works within the field? A teenager who has had experience with this issue? A person in the local community who has dealt with this issue in his or her personal life? Identify that person and make arrangements to contact him/her.

B. Generate GOOD interview questions

1. Start with simple, factual questions that the interviewee can easily answer. Ask about the interviewee’s qualifications or knowledge. For example, “How long have you studied or worked on X?” “What first made you interested in X?”

2. Phrase your questions in such a way as to ensure an open-ended response. Avoid asking Yes/No questions. If you do, always follow up with a “Why?” or “Could you explain?”

3. Seek information about personal opinions with regards to the chosen controversial issue. However, attempt to remain as neutral as possible during the interview so as not to influence responses.

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4. Be flexible with your line of questions. Generate a few additional ones in case the interview results take an unanticipated turn. Review your evidence from the articles to see if there is anything you may specifically need to strengthen your existing argument. Ask clarifying and interesting questions which may yield unique, valuable information for your speech.

5. The last question should be an invitation for the interviewee to add any final points or comments of his or her own.

C. Conduct the interview

1. Explain who you are, why you want to talk to them, and what you wish to find out. The purpose of that interview should be made clear to the interviewees before you begin the interview.

2. Explain who will get access to their answers and how their answers will be analyzed and for what purpose.

3. Encourage and elicit responses with non-committal body language, such as nodding, or murmuring “uh huh,” and so on.

4. Thank your interviewee when you are finished!

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