

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Teachers and students will learn to use the video camera as a classroom tool for reflection, critical thinking, listening, and speaking.

Invitation for learning

This is an excellent first activity for introducing the video camera to the classroom, including handling all of the basic equipment, assigning roles, developing a simple script, and learning about set and lighting considerations. Once teachers learn this basic video interview process, they can apply it to numerous learning opportunities for themselves and their students.

Directions

Working in teams of five, learners will produce video interviews in which they share something of interest, such as a remembrance from childhood, to an identified audience. Teams will:

1. Clarify and visualize the audience for their interviews. For example, teachers being interviewed may want to think of their students as the audience.
2. Create a script for a five-minute interview, including (a) host introducing and welcoming the guest, (b) question list for guest (e.g., childhood memories, something special about guest or family), (c) questions or comments from the audience, and (d) host closing and signing off.
3. Choose an indoor or outdoor setting with (a) optimal lighting (no backlight), (b) seating (chairs or bench), (c) an attractive backdrop (e.g., wall hanging, bushes), and (d) minimal distractions.
4. Set up the equipment: camera (adjusting the camera height to eye level), tripod, and handheld microphone.
5. Assign roles:
 - *Camera operator/Director.* The camera operator manages the following shots: shot on host, shot on host and guest, shot on guest, slow pan between guest and host, slow pan to audience. As director, this person also controls the action on the set by saying, “Quiet on the set” and “Standing by” before starting the recording, pressing the record button on the camera, waiting two seconds before pointing to the host to cue the start of the interview, and pausing the camera at the end of the interview before saying, “All clear.”
 - *Set manager/Audio monitor.* The set manager sits just off the set to keep bystanders quiet and under control. As audio monitor, this person also wears headphones attached to the camera to ensure that the audio signal stays loud and clean.

- *Host.* The host honors the guest as the most important person on the set, ensuring that they are at ease and comfortable, working with them to develop and review the script, and listening carefully to them, asking follow-up questions as appropriate. The host often writes notes and questions on a sheet of paper that can be taped to the tripod as a prompt sheet. The host also remembers to smile and talks to both the guest and the camera, sometimes looking at one and then the other. At the close of the interview, after signing-off, the host waits and smiles until hearing “All clear” from the director. This role can be very difficult and overwhelming for children, so initially the teacher may want to assume this role.
 - *Guest.* The guest sits to the left of the host, talks to both the host and the camera, and understands that the interview is not over until the director says, “All clear.”
 - *Audience.* The audience sits to the right of the host, just off-camera, listening to the interview. When the host asks if there are questions or comments from the audience, they take the microphone, introduce themselves, and speak.
6. Shoot five interviews, alternating the roles so that everyone has the opportunity to experience each.
 7. Copy the interviews to VHS tape while viewing and enjoying the work. If a VCR and television are not available, play the interviews directly on the camera.
 8. Send the VHS copy home with participants to share on home VCRs with family and community.

Classroom applications

Video interviews can play a central role in Pacific island classrooms. Many of the projects described in this book are anchored in video interview skills. Children learn to listen and record one another (and community guests) as they talk and share information about themselves, their families and community, and their in-school learning. Their videotapes can be copied to VHS to be shared with parents and the community, or archived in the school library.

The skills needed to conduct video interviews have immediate relevance for careers in media and communications. Students who learn to produce quality video interviews may have their work broadcast on community television. Interviews with community elders, storytelling, story reading, and poster lessons may be particularly appreciated.

Stretching our imaginations: Dare to dream

Imagine a video station for your classroom, where student teams show and tell what they are learning. The station is in a safe place: a corner of the classroom, sheltered from the entrance door. A small set is decorated with a wall hanging and a mat. The camera is on the tripod, at low eye-level, so that children can sit on the mat. There may be one or two small chairs for adult participants. Hosts and presenters rehearse before the shoot, developing a script that is reviewed by their teacher. Teams each have their own videotapes to maintain portfolios of their recordings. Impossible? Not at all.