

## WRITER'S GUIDELINES – INTERVIEWS

Often an article in the BJA newsletter will take the form of a Q&A, with questions from you and answers from your interviewee. Here are some useful tips:

1. **Know your purpose:** What do you hope to learn from the person you are interviewing?
2. **Consider the audience:** Keep in mind that most readers of the BJA newsletter are not musicians, although of course they are interested in jazz music
3. **Do your background research:** learn as much as you can about your interviewee before the interview.
4. **Prepare questions in advance:** This will help you keep your focus – and you could even share these questions with your subject in advance.
5. **Face-to-Face interviews are best:** Allow at least an hour. 90 minutes is best. But if it isn't possible to meet in person, you can set up a phone interview. A written interview is less effective than in-person or telephone.
6. **Use open-ended questions:** Questions that invite reflection, stories, opinions – not just questions with “yes-or-no” answers. Be ready to ask follow-up questions for clarification or for a deeper response.
7. **Avoid biased questions** that assume a certain answer.
8. **Be flexible:** Don't feel obliged to stick rigidly with your questions. The interview may turn into some unexpected but interesting directions. But....
9. **Keep the focus on jazz:** the music, the Baltimore jazz community, or the state of jazz in general. If the interviewee starts to stray into unrelated topics, try to respectfully steer them back to the main focus.
10. **Take notes:** This can be hard to do while you want to be listening attentively. But if you don't take some notes, you may forget some important points later.

Obviously, after the interview, you'll thank the person for their time. And it is probably a good idea to send them a summary of your notes so that they can correct any factual errors or misinterpretations.

When you compose your final article, you don't have to include EVERYTHING that came out in the interview. Just choose the most relevant and interesting material. In the “A” (answer) paragraphs, you should quote the interviewee's actual words, but you can use ellipses to omit some digressions or phrasing that don't really help convey the interviewee's message.