

history, what age would you choose? If your house were on fire what would you grab first on the way out?"

15. **Personalize and localize interviews with celebrities.** Ask them if they've been out to dinner in town and where. Ask if they've checked out any of the sights; make suggestions.
16. **Be an active listener.** Being preoccupied with what you're going to say next rather than listening to the person talk causes you to miss opportunities that could take the conversation down a road you may not have even considered. It can also cause you to ask dumb questions like something they already talked about a minute earlier.

Listen intently and the conversation will be more spontaneous. You'll be a much better facilitator and the conversation will be more engaging. Larry King stares the person he's interviewing directly in the eyes practically the entire interview. "The key to a great interviewer is being a great listener, because the best questions live in the person's answer." – Larry King

17. **Remind listeners who you are speaking to and give the station's calls throughout the interview.**
18. **The way you ask a question can make the difference in a lively response and a dull one.** Instead of "What do you think about the unisex look today?" a much better visual question might be something like, "Some people say that artists like Michael Jackson created the unisex look. What do you think of this whole movement? Is it here to stay or will it fizzle out next year?"
19. **Leading questions can work.** Dr. Phil McGraw says, "Eighty percent of all questions are statements in disguise. Non-personal phrasing is the key to making leading questions work. "When was the last time you cried" can be lightened with "When was the last time you cried at the movies?"
20. **Closing Techniques:** Word association segments to close interviews can be fun and revealing. Guests have to say the first thing that comes to mind when you name three or four people from different walks of life (Britney Spears, reality TV shows, the holidays, etc.), for example.

Come up with your own signature technique or final question to end your interviews on a memorable note.

In the next Bullet Points issue we'll follow this up with tips on how to get celebrity interviews, criteria for figuring out which celebrity interviews you should put on the air, and how to treat celebrities when they come into the studio and on the phone.



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- ✓ What the last movie you saw? Do you have an all-time favorite?
 - ✓ Who influenced your work or do you have any role models?
 - ✓ Any secret passions? What would you be doing if you were not a performer?
 - ✓ If we took a ride in your car, what CD's would I find?
 - ✓ Can you give me a fun detail about yourself that's not in your bio?
 - ✓ How do you shop for groceries?
 - ✓ How do you get your driver's license renewed?
 - ✓ Where are you most comfortable? At home...at your parents' house...at the beach?
 - ✓ Who's the last person you had over for dinner?
 - ✓ Who do you hang out with?
6. **An opening attention getter technique:** Present tense teases are an excellent way to grab listeners' attention and set up more anticipation beginning an interview. After the opening greeting and warm up question such as one of the above, pose an intriguing question (not sensitive) and have the guest hold the answer while you go to a quick traffic update, major concert announcement, etc.
 7. **Move the conversation forward toward a series of conclusions.** Dull conversations move in circles or jump around from topic to topic.
 8. **Ask open-ended questions.** "When" questions get a story going. "When" takes the person to a scene, a setting, and then to a story. "When did you first realize..." Comparisons also work. For example, "What was your best year touring?" Don't already incorporate the answer into your question – it makes you sound like a know-it-all.
 9. **Have a Plan B.** If you get off on the wrong foot or the interviewee is not forthcoming, switch gears and try a different approach. Non-questions can be effective to get someone talking. Examples include: "Take me through the process...Tell me what is important to you. What do you value deeply?"
 10. **Ask sensitive questions deep into the interview.** Then alternate difficult questions with easier, softer ones.
 11. **Have your producer, another station employee, friend, 'fake character' or listener ask sensitive questions.** This approach may work for you if asking those types of questions is out of character with who you are as a personality.

Always include listener questions when there's time and it's technically feasible. This helps humanize the interview and you may get some questions you hadn't thought of.
 12. **Phrase controversial questions in a non-personal and matter-of-fact way,** much as you would give someone the time of day. For example, rather than blurting out, "Are you gay?" You could say something like, "What's all this stuff in the tabloids about you being gay?" As the facilitator, your job is to ask questions and play off comments in a way that draws the person out, not puts them off.
 13. **Question clusters can be an effective device to help you delve deeper into someone's personality.** A series of questions on one topic are best asked one at a time so they aren't overwhelmed. "Tell me about the first time you lost your cool with a director. What was the cause? How did it finally end? What did you learn from that situation?" are examples of this technique.
 14. **Hypothetical questions can generate entertainment value.** "What three books, CDs, movies, etc. would you take with you if you were stranded on an island? What would you do if you were not (acting, writing, singing, etc.)? If you could live any time in

...BULLET POINTS...

Making Celebrity Interviews Into Conversations

Here are 20 strategies that will help you have an engaging conversation, rather than a boring question and answer session:

1. **Answer these two questions for yourself when preparing for an interview.** “What would listeners ask this person if they could ask any questions whatsoever? What can I say to get quoted?” Go in with the intention of making it a memorable conversation for listeners. The key is to draw out the person being interviewed with questions that listeners really want to know about and the person has fun answering.
2. **Make the interview an enjoyable experience.** Make coffee, snacks, etc., available. Have a package of T-shirts, CD’s, etc. for them when they walk in. Make the person feel comfortable by focusing on their human side. With a comedian you can be more of a smartass, for example. But don’t try too hard or be overly friendly with the artist (like you hang out together all the time) -- it can come off embarrassing. Just be real.
3. **Prep! Prep! Prep!** Read the bios. See the movie. Listen to the CD. Read the book (at least a synopsis of it). It’s hard to fake any of that unless you have a huge support staff to summarize and condense the information.
4. **Write out your questions in advance to help inscribe them on your mind.** They’ll come out as natural and spontaneous conversation. If you need your notes during the interview edit them down to key words so that the questions sound more conversational and not scripted. Look for emotional hot buttons that will stimulate conversation.
5. **Avoid starting interviews with controversial questions.** That could easily cause the person to shut down before you get started. Warm up celebrity guests with non-challenging yet personal questions that get them talking about themselves. These types of questions will help develop a celebrity’s trust in you and get them feeling comfortable with the process. Examples include:
 - ✓ Where did you grow up?
 - ✓ Any brothers and sisters?
 - ✓ Do you have a favorite childhood memory?
 - ✓ How do you spend your holidays?
 - ✓ Still stay in touch with any childhood friends?
 - ✓ Were you popular in school?
 - ✓ What kind of student would your teachers say you were?
 - ✓ Do you have a favorite junk food?
 - ✓ What’s the worst place you’ve performed (and why)? The best?
 - ✓ What kind of jobs did you do before (acting, the band, etc.)?
 - ✓ What TV shows do you watch?
 - ✓ What’s the last book you read? Do you have an all-time favorite?