9.19: Interviewing as a Research Skill

Interviewing will be your bread and butter as a communicator. It is the means by which you will elicit information from people, get new perspectives, and achieve new understandings.

Tapping into people – primary sources – through interviewing is a skill honed over time. In this lesson we will talk about the types of interviews, how to select interviewees based on your information task, and the steps involved in the interviewing process.

Interviewing is a technique that is incorporated at more than one point in the information seeking process. Advertising researchers might use focus-group interviews to learn about issues they intend to examine more extensively through survey interviews later in the research process. News reporters do a preliminary set of interviews, along with background research in the news archive, in order to get themselves up to speed on the issues of the story they are
covering. Public relations practitioners often interview sources such as company officials when writing news releases.

Interviews differ according to purpose, format, and medium. The techniques used for interviews also differ depending on the goal you hope to reach through the interviewing process.