

Closed question: *"Is shopping here different from shopping in Kazakhstan?"*

More open is: *"What is different when shopping here from shopping in Kazakhstan?"*

Also questions of time and place are closed, as they only leave one possible answer.

Questions: *"How long does the club already exist?"*

"Since when are you head of the club?"

"Where were you born?"

Answers: *"since 1975", "already three years", "in Halle"*

This sort of question is important and sensible when researching and during the preliminary talk, but not in the interview.

Closed questions are only suitable when asking an additional question, and when you are trying to force a cagey interview guest (e.g. a politician) to directness.

Do not use Leading Questions

Leading questions are a special case of closed questions. In a leading question the answer is already anticipated in the question which means that the guest is alleged to answer in a specific way.

"Don't you feel unhappy so far away from your home country?"

"It must be really hard for you to express yourself in a foreign language?"

Use your prior knowledge to include in your questions

Facts that you have looked up prior to the interview, but which are unknown to the audience can be cleverly included in your questions.

"Your book is entitled: 'More colours on the radio'. With this book you are calling for a greater variety of dialects and accents on the radio. But why are we only hearing German without a trace of an accent on most programmes?"

Confront with an opposing opinion

A confrontation with objections makes an interview vivid because it can make your guest express himself clearly and articulately. You can phrase these objections as a third party's ones, for example by citing someone or as a known opposition etc.

However, you must research your facts carefully and it is best to write them down. So that no personal argument develops it is best to speak politely.

"If I may repeat, you are saying that you were not aware that the site in the development area was polluted with heavy metals. However, here I have a report from 1985 in which the pollution has already been detected. Your name is noted as the contractor of this report. Sorry, but how could you release the area as building land now?"

Ask about concrete events, experiences and examples

Asking for anecdotes, personal impressions and experiences, concrete descriptions and examples make an interview vivid, personal and special because these particular answers to this sort of question can only be given by your guest.

Typical questions about concrete events and personal experiences:

"What were your first impressions of the hostel for asylum seekers?"

"What was the typical daily routine there?"

"What was it like living with the other residents?"

Listen carefully and ask further questions

The most important thing for a good interview is: listening and then asking further questions. Is something still not understandable, still vague or very general? When was something said that was interesting? Take up the lead and ask again!

Typical further questions:

"Could you give an example?"

"In which situation did you notice this most?"

"What does that mean, what if I was in this situation?"

"You've just mentioned the... Could you describe it?"

"And what happened then?"

"How could you describe the...?"

"You said that the... was different. What exactly was different about it?"

It is best to think of an opening question and a final question already before the interview.

In the interview you can decide if you really need the final question.