

# SOP Template: Interview Guidelines for Complainant, Respondent, and Witnesses

This SOP provides **interview guidelines for complainant, respondent, and witnesses**, focusing on ensuring a fair, consistent, and respectful approach during the information-gathering process. It outlines effective communication techniques, confidentiality protocols, question framing strategies, and documentation standards to accurately capture all relevant details. The procedure aims to support fact-finding while protecting the rights and dignity of all parties involved.

## 1. Purpose

To ensure that all interviews conducted as part of an investigation are impartial, thorough, and respectful, providing consistent opportunities for all parties (complainant, respondent, and witnesses) to present information.

## 2. Scope

Applies to interviews involving complainants, respondents, and witnesses as part of an internal investigation process.

## 3. Preparation

- Review relevant policies, procedures, and case details prior to interviews.
- Prepare neutral and open-ended questions in advance.
- Arrange for a private, comfortable, and interruption-free environment.
- Inform interviewees in advance regarding the purpose, format, and expected duration.
- Ensure the availability of interpreters or support persons if requested or required.

## 4. Effective Communication Techniques

- Maintain a professional, non-judgmental, and empathetic demeanour.
- Use clear, simple language; avoid jargon or technical terms.
- Allow interviewees to speak without interruption.
- Ask one question at a time; avoid leading or suggestive questions.
- Paraphrase or summarize statements to confirm understanding.

## 5. Confidentiality Protocols

- Inform interviewees about confidentiality limits (i.e., information may be shared only with those involved in the investigation process).
- Securely store all notes and recordings; limit access to authorized personnel.
- Do not discuss case details outside allowed channels.

## 6. Question Framing Strategies

- Start with general, open-ended questions before focusing on specifics.
- Avoid accusatory or emotionally charged language.
- Frame questions to clarify facts, timelines, and relationships.
- Ask for examples or specific instances when appropriate.

## 7. Documentation Standards

- Record interviewee's name, date, time, and location of interview.
- Document statements and responses verbatim when possible.
- Note any non-verbal cues or emotional responses relevant to the matter.
- Review notes with the interviewee for accuracy before ending the session.

## 8. Interview Process Overview

**1. Opening:**

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview.
- Explain confidentiality and recording protocols.
- Outline the interview structure and confirm consent to proceed.

**2. Information Gathering:**

- Allow the interviewee to share their account or perspective.
- Use prepared questions and follow-up as needed.

**3. Clarification:**

- Address inconsistencies or unclear responses with follow-up questions.

**4. Closure:**

- Summarize key points and confirm understanding.
- Inform the interviewee of next steps and expected timelines.
- Thank the interviewee for their participation.

## 9. Special Considerations

- Be sensitive to trauma or distress; provide access to support if needed.
- Accommodate cultural, linguistic, or accessibility needs as appropriate.
- Document any requests for accommodations and how they were addressed.

**Note:**

This SOP should be periodically reviewed and updated in accordance with changes to legal requirements, organizational policies, or best practices in investigative interviewing.