The Press Conference: Interview skills workshop

This workshop builds on the 'Go All In' webinar. Students will step into the shoes of sports journalists and broadcasters, to learn the mechanics of a great interview. By taking on specific studio roles, students will practise key oracy skills: reading a room, asking the right questions and speaking with confidence.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, students will have had the opportunity to:

- Extract key information from the Press Kits to design engaging and relevant interview questions.
- Practise using open questions, active listening and positive body language to lead engaging conversations and build strong connections.

Part 1: The Research Room (10 minutes)

Reading Focus: Comprehension (Extracting key information) and Application (Using text to structure relevant questions).

Every great interview starts with research. In this activity, students work in pairs to read a 'Press Kit' profile and design three killer questions.

The Task: Provide the students with the three Press Kit profiles below. Their job as reporters is to choose one profile that interests them the most, read the brief and draft three open questions to ask the guest.

Press Kit 1: Amir (Age 15) - West End Actor

Amir has only been acting for three years but absolutely loves it. He recently auditioned for a major West End show, just for the experience, and unexpectedly landed the lead role.

Because he had only ever performed in school productions, he worried he was not good enough to be there. He struggled with terrible stage fright and kept freezing during the early rehearsals.

He started reading scripts from his favourite films and listening to podcasts by famous actors about how they handle nerves. He used their breathing techniques to calm down and get in the zone.

He nailed the opening night, received a standing ovation and a fantastic review in a national newspaper. .

Press Kit 2: Maya (Age 16) - Singer-Songwriter

Maya writes her own original music and performed on Britain's Got Talent last year, reaching the televised live shows.

The judges told her on live television that while her voice was beautiful, she needed to connect much more with the audience through her lyrics if she wanted to truly stand out.

She started reading poetry and studying the lyrics of her favourite artists to see how they told stories. She also kept a daily journal to capture her own thoughts and experiences.

She returned to the stage with a powerful original song that connected deeply with the crowd, earning her a standing ovation and an invitation to record in a professional studio.

Press Kit 3: Jordan (Age 15) - Academy Footballer

Jordan plays as a midfielder for a top-tier youth football academy.

She is technically gifted but kept getting caught out of position during fast-paced matches against older players.

She started reading tactical breakdowns of her favourite professional players and studying match heat maps. She learned to 'read the game' and anticipate moves before the ball even came to her.

This season, she provided the most assists in her league and was made team captain. Next month, she has trials for the England under 16 team!

Question Design Strategy:

The webinar will encourage students to move away from closed questions (which only get 'yes' or 'no' answers) and focus on open questions.

Teacher Modelling (Optional Support): Before students dive into the Press Kits, model the process together on the board. Choose one of the panel guests from the 'Go All In' webinar and work as a class to brainstorm and design a strong open question for them. This provides a clear, shared example of what success looks like.

- **Closed (Avoid):** Were you nervous before the big moment?
- **Open (Use):** How did you overcome your nerves when things got difficult?
- **The 'Go All In' Question (Use):** What was the most important thing you learned from your research that helped you succeed?

Part 2:
Going Live (15 minutes)

Oracy Focus: Physical (Body language and voice) and Social & Emotional (Active listening and confidence).

Students group up into fours to conduct the live interview. Each student takes on a specific role. After the first interview (approx. 5 minutes), they swap roles. If time allows, continue swapping so that everyone has the chance to perform every role. As a minimum, each student should take on at least one performing role (Journalist or Guest) and one observing role (Camera Operator or Producer) so they can both perform and observe.

The roles:

1. The Journalist (The Lead Interviewer)

- **The Job:** You are the host. Your goal is to make your guest feel valued and help the audience learn about their experiences.
- **The Secret to Success:** Think of your questions as a ladder. You start on the bottom rung with your prepared question. When the guest says something interesting, you climb further up the ladder by asking follow-up questions like "Can you tell me a bit more about that?" or "How did that feel?" to go deeper into their story.
- **Oracy Skill:** Focus on **Active Listening.** It is about more than just hearing the words. Nod while the guest speaks, use short encouraging sounds like "I see", and make sure your body language is open and facing them. If they share an important point, try briefly repeating it back to show you truly understand. This builds trust and encourages them to keep talking.

2. The Guest (The Interviewee)

- **The Job:** You are the expert on your own life. Whether you are playing Amir, Maya, Jordan, or being yourself, your job is to share your journey.
- **The Secret to Success:** Try to expand your answers by giving a three- part answer. First, answer the question directly. Second, share a real-life example to paint a picture (try starting with, "For example..."). Third, share how it made you feel or what you learned (you could say, "That made me realise..."). This structure helps you feel confident and keeps the conversation flowing.
- **Oracy Skill:** Focus on **Vocal Expression.** Try to vary your tone. If you are talking about a difficult moment, let the audience hear how much it mattered to you.

3. The Camera Operator (Physical Oracy Coach)

- **The Job:** You are observing the physical side of the interview to ensure everyone looks confident and engaged.
- **The Secret to Success:** Watch for the "Big Three":
  - **Eye Contact:** Are they looking at each other?
  - **Posture:** Are they sitting comfortably but attentively?
  - **Gestures:** Are they using their hands to help explain things?

- **Feedback Tip:** After the interview, give one "Glow" (something they did well) and one "Grow" (one specific thing to try next time).

4. The Producer (Social and Emotional Oracy Coach)

- **The Job:** You are listening to the flow of the conversation. You make sure it feels like a real connection, not just a list of questions.
- **The Secret to Success:** Listen carefully to how they interact. Did the Journalist interrupt? Did the Guest give a very short answer that stopped the conversation?
- **Oracy Skill:** Focus on **Turn-Taking.** A great interview is like a game of catch. The conversation should move smoothly between both people without anyone dropping the ball.

Part 3: The Post-Match Review (5 minutes)

Facilitator Guidance: Bring the class back together to celebrate what went well and reflect on the skills they have practised. Ask the Camera Operators and Producers to share their observations.

Use the prompts below to guide a positive group discussion:

- What did the Journalists do well to make the Guest feel listened to and valued?
- What physical changes (like sitting up straighter or keeping eye contact) made the biggest difference to how confident the speakers looked?

Journaling Activity: If time allows, encourage the students to take a quiet moment to reflect on the session. Ask them to write a short summary in a journal or notebook answering three questions:

1. What is the most important thing you have learnt today about communicating with others?
2. How did taking on these roles make you feel?
3. Where might you use these communication skills in real life?

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