GENERAL

how to reference an interview

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How to Reference an Interview: A Complete Guide for Students, Researchers, and Writers

In academic writing, journalism, and content creation, interviews are a powerful way to bring firsthand insight, expert opinion, and unique perspectives into your work. However, citing an interview correctly is often overlooked, leading to plagiarism concerns, weak arguments, or a lack of credibility. This guide will walk you through everything you need to know about **how to reference an interview**—from choosing the right citation style to handling special cases like virtual or unpublished interviews. By the end, you'll be equipped to add interview citations that are clear, consistent, and professional.

Why Referencing Interviews Matters

Interviews are primary sources that offer original, unfiltered information. When you reference them:

- Credibility – Readers can trace the source of your claims.
- Academic integrity – Proper citations avoid plagiarism and uphold scholarly standards.
- Reproducibility – Future researchers can locate the interview if they wish to verify or build upon your work.
- Legal compliance – Some jurisdictions require explicit acknowledgment of spoken statements, especially in journalism.

Ignoring interview citations can undermine your entire argument, so mastering how to reference an interview is essential for any serious writer.

Types of Interviews and Their Citation Challenges

Interviews come in many flavors, each presenting its own citation nuances. Below are the most common types and why they can be tricky:

- Personal or Face to Face Interviews – Often conducted in person, these are typically unpublished and may not have a formal record.
- Phone or Video Calls – Recorded or unrecorded, these can be hard to trace if the conversation isn't archived.
- Online or Social Media Interviews – Transcripts may exist on blogs, podcasts, or YouTube channels.
- Media Interviews (TV, Radio, Newspaper) – Published in a public format, but the interviewee may be quoted directly or paraphrased.
- Academic Interviews – Often part of qualitative research and may be included in a dissertation or thesis.
- Corporate Interviews – Interviews with company executives or employees for industry reports or case studies.
- Unpublished or Confidential Interviews – These may have restricted access and require special handling.

Understanding the interview type helps you decide which citation format fits best and how to gather the necessary information for the reference.

Choosing the Right Citation Style

Different academic disciplines and publication outlets favor distinct citation systems. Selecting the correct style is the first step in mastering how to reference an interview.

- APA (American Psychological Association) – Common in social sciences.

- MLA (Modern Language Association) – Used in humanities, especially literature and cultural studies.
- Chicago Manual of Style (Notes & Bibliography) – Popular in history and some social sciences.
- Harvard Referencing – Widely used in the UK and other countries for a broad range of subjects.
- IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) – Used in engineering and computer science.

Check your instructor's guidelines, journal submission requirements, or the style guide of the publication you're targeting. Once you've identified the style, you can follow the specific rules for interview citations.

Step by Step: How to Reference an Interview

For any interview, you'll need at least the following:

- Interviewee's full name
- Title or position (optional but helpful)
- Date of the interview
- Location or platform (e.g., "Phone call," "Zoom," "New York, NY")
- Medium (e.g., "Audio recording," "Transcribed text," "Video") – if applicable
- Access details (e.g., "Unpublished interview" or URL if online)

Most citation styles use parenthetical or footnote references. For example, APA uses (Interviewee, Year), while Chicago often uses a footnote.

Insert the collected details into the correct template. We'll provide templates for the most common styles below.

Check that every in text citation matches a full reference entry and that the formatting is uniform throughout your document.

Examples for Popular Citation Styles

APA distinguishes between **personal communications** (e.g., a phone interview) and **interviews that are retrievable** (e.g., a published podcast). Use the following formats:

Last Name, First Initial. (Year, Month Day). Title of episode. In *Title of podcast*. Production Company. URL

Example (personal communication):

(J. Smith, personal communication, March 15, 2024)

Example (podcast):

Smith, J. (2024, March 15). The future of AI. In *Tech Talk*. Tech Media. https://www.techmedia.com/podcast/future-of-ai

MLA treats interviews as **personal communications** if they are not publicly accessible. The format is:

Last Name, First Name. Interview. Date of interview. Medium.

Example:

Smith, John. Interview. 15 Mar. 2024. Phone.

If the interview is published online, use the following:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Interview." *Title of Website*, Publisher, Date of publication, URL. Accessed Day Month Year.

Chicago style typically uses footnotes for interviews. The footnote format is:

1. First Name Last Name, interview by Interviewer's Name, Date, Medium (Location), Interviewee's Position (if relevant).

Example footnote:

1. John Smith, interview by Jane Doe, March 15, 2024, phone call (New York, NY).

In the bibliography, list the interview similarly, but without the interviewer's name:

Smith, John.

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