Wichowski | EGov

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**Tips: How to ask good questions with little to no prep time**

**IN ADVANCE**

1. Know your goals: Whether specific or background info, know what you’re after
2. Prepare: Even if you don’t know details, you know the general topic area. Write out some sample questions based on what you know might be discussed
3. Be specific: Open questions with “how” “what” “where” “when” and “why” if you want a specific answer; “Can you talk about…” for general responses

**IN THE MOMENT**

1. Be professional: Be respectful and polite; even if the subject doesn’t like your question, they will take it seriously

1. Be human: Make eye contact. Be warm. Be conscious of your body language
2. Record the interview: Ensure you have an accurate record for later write-ups and insurance against accusations of misquotes
3. Ask ONE question: Two- or three-part questions give the subject options to ignore the parts they prefer not to answer
4. Be flexible: Even with questions prepped in advance, something may come up in the moment that sparks an idea for a new question
5. Don’t fill silences: Ask your question then wait. Your subject will fill the silence eventually
6. Don’t give up too easily: It may feel impolite to ask direct or tough questions. Keep in mind that your readers (colleagues / bosses) are counting on you for information