

# Interview with a Community Member

*Alaska FFA Association and USDA Northwest Climate Hub*

*Grade Levels 6-12*



## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Students will learn tips for effective interviews. Students will apply these tips as they conduct peer interviews with a partner. Students will then conduct an interview with a friend, family member, or community member discussing their relationship with land in Alaska and climate change.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn how to conduct effective interviews.
2. Students will practice conducting an effective interview with a peer.
3. Students will conduct an interview with a community member.
4. Students will review and summarize their interview.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Computer & projector (1 for classroom; 1 per student for “Review” section)

2. Copies of the **Question List** (1 per student)
3. Recording device (1 per student—can be a phone, recorder, or tablet)
4. Notebook (if students would like to take notes during their interview)
5. Computer to write report on interview

## WARM-UP ACTIVITY

*Students will watch the Four Tips for an Effective Interview video and conduct a practice interview with a peer.*

### Watch [Four Tips for an Effective Interview video](#)

1. Explain to students that they will be asking questions because they will conduct an interview with a peer. Because they are planning on eventually interviewing a community member, they need to practice interview skills.
2. Explain to students that they are going to learn more about effective interviews through the [Four Tips for an Effective Interview video](#).
3. Play [the video](#) for students.
4. Explain to students that many of the questions included in the **Questions List** will help students to ask questions like those outlined in this video.

### Interview a Peer

1. Explain that students will now conduct peer interviews with each other to practice the tips for effective interviews.
2. Ask students to pick a few questions from the **Questions List** that they might ask a peer. Examples include the following:

“What are you proudest of?”

“What is the hardest thing you have ever had to do?”

“Who has had the biggest influence on your life? How?”
3. Ask students to choose one question that will be the start of their interview with a peer. The question should follow the tips for an effective question. It can be one of the questions from the **Questions List**, or they can come up with a new question.
4. Pair up students.
5. Let students know that everyone will have a chance to be an interviewer and interviewee. Ask each pair to decide who will be the first to conduct an interview.

6. Explain that each person will have three minutes to interview their peers. You will announce when students can switch roles.

### DEBRIEF

Have a class discussion of the interviews using the following questions:

1. What was it like to interview a peer?
2. Which of the interviewing tips did you use, and how did it help you as the interviewer?
3. As an interviewee, did you feel that the interviewer really listened to your answers? If so, what did the interviewer do or ask to make you feel this way?
4. What else could an interviewer do to show you that they are really listening to you?

### ACTIVITY—Interview with a Community Member

*Students will prepare to interview a community member of their choosing. Students will then conduct a fifteen-minute interview with a community member using five questions.*

1. Choosing your interviewee:
  - a. Your ideal interviewee should have some relationship to the land, whether that be gardening, farming, ranching, logging, fishing, hunting, etc.
  - b. Your ideal interviewee is someone you can easily contact, who will be willing to undergo a short interview with you about the land and climate, and how it has and has not changed in their experience.
  - c. Your interviewee could be a family member, friend, or community member you already know, or someone you hear about through the community grapevine.
2. Research your interviewee: You should have a little understanding of your interviewee's background.
  - a. Where do they live and work?
  - b. What do they do for work?
  - c. What experience might they have with agriculture/gardening/ranching/working with the land?
3. Ask their permission to interview and record them and set up a time to meet. Ensure that you are following COVID protocols for everyone's safety.
  - a. Inform interviewees that your interview will not go beyond fifteen minutes, will be shared with your teacher, and may be shared with your classmates.

- b. Decide whether to conduct the interview via Zoom, phone, or in-person.
    - c. You can either email or call the potential interviewee to ask permission and set up a time to meet.
  4. Make a list of questions you will ask the interviewee.
    - a. Choose five questions from the **Questions List**, at least one question from each category, or brainstorm your own questions.
    - b. Tailor your questions to your interviewee. You wouldn't necessarily ask a logger about his favorite crop or a farmer how to use a crosscut saw. Make sure your questions make sense for your interviewee.
    - c. Turn yes/no questions into open-ended questions. This will encourage your interviewee to discuss more with you.
    - d. Have a warm-up question to establish rapport with your interviewee. These could be questions like "what's your favorite season?" or "how is your dog doing?" Ask any question to establish a connection with your interviewee.
    - e. Think about the order of your questions. Do they make sense in order, or should you switch them around so they flow better?
  5. Test your recording technology.
    - a. Make sure that your device (whether that's your computer, phone, or recorder) is working correctly and has enough charge, batteries, etc.
  6. Find a good location to conduct your interview.
    - a. If interviewing in person, have the interview in a place that is quiet, and where there are few distractions.
    - b. If interviewing online or on the phone, make sure you are in a room that is quiet, and ask if it is possible for your interviewee to be in a room that is quiet as well.
    - c. Do a test recording before beginning your interview to make sure sound quality is appropriate.
  7. Have a fun and conversational interview
    - a. Limit your interview to 15 minutes.
    - b. Your list of questions is a guide, not a rule book.
    - c. Listen to your interviewee. Rather than strictly going by the next question you have in your list, if your interviewee says something interesting that you have a question about that's not on your list, ask them your new question! This is a conversation, and different questions are almost certain to arise in the moment.
    - d. Don't interrupt or step on the answer of your interviewee. Fully listen and allow your interviewee to complete their thoughts before asking further questions.
    - e. Be curious about your interviewee's life and experiences.
  8. Thank your interviewee!

- a. After fifteen minutes, stop recording and be sure to save the recording.

## REVIEW—Two Page Summary

Listen to your recorded interview. Write a two-page summary of your interview. Feel free to include direct quotes from your interviewee, but make sure to integrate them into your own writing, rather than block-quoting your interviewee. Be sure to answer the following questions in essay form, not as a bulleted list:

1. What is your interviewee's name (if your interviewee prefers to remain anonymous, note that in your summary)?
2. Where is your interviewee from?
3. What do they do for a living?
4. What activities do they enjoy that bring them in contact with the land (hunting, gardening, logging, etc.)?
5. Include your interviewee's answers to your five questions. Be sure to integrate their answers so that they flow well and make sense.
6. How did your interviewee's answers make **you** think differently about farming/gardening/etc. in Alaska?

## EXAMPLES of Alaskan Interviews:

1. [Inside an ambitious family farm in Delta Junction, Alaska | INDIE ALASKA](#)
2. [Could Alaskan Seaweed Help Save the Planet? | INDIE ALASKA](#)
3. [Gardening in the Arctic - How food's gone from mammoth to kale | INDIE ALASKA](#)
4. [The Hives and Lows of Beekeeping in Alaska | Indie Alaska](#)