

# 3: Finding sources and asking questions

Sport Journalism  
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## Recap

- Types of stories: Advance, game recap, post-game analysis. Beat writing, feature stories.
- **Advance** stories: Significance, team records, background, key people and stats, styles
- Game **summary**: What happened + emotions
- Post-game **analysis**: Perspective and future
- **Beat** reporting: Regular following of team or sport
- **Feature** stories: Stand out for quality writing

## Journalism and reporting

- **Depends on information from good sources**
- Finding – developing! – sources is an endless process – much like meeting new people!
- *Personal observation*
- Primary sources
- Secondary sources
- Material sources
- Behind-the-scenes sources

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## Personal observation



- “Press row,” or “press box:” minimal distraction <sup>4</sup>

## Press box etiquette

- **It is impolite and unprofessional to cheer** while in these areas: Journalists **report what happens**, they do not root for an outcome.
- A “cheering” reporter is likely one-sided:
  - Am. football game study (1954): Fans of the winning team saw the game as *aggressive but fair*, while fans of the losing team *complained* about the violence:  
**Fanship makes us see different games, things differently. (Only in sport?)**

## Primary sources

**Provide information, opinion, insight vital to the outcome of a story:**

- Athletes (52.1%)
- Coaches (14.2%)
- Spokespeople, management (6.9%)

*(Horky & Nieland, 2013)*

## “Flash interview” and mixed zones



Anja Hlača Ferjančič (Radio Slovenia) interviews Laura Ludwig and Kira Walkenhorst in the mixed zone of Copacabana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro



Igor Tominec (Radio Slovenia) conducts a flash interview with Urška Žolnir following the medal ceremony at the 2012 Olympics

## Small group interview

- Usually post-game interviews
- Location: On the court, outside a locker room, by the team bus
  - In a hallway with passing fans who scream at you/the athlete...
- Semi-formal; time and space are limited
- Public and group setting: avoid asking too many follow-up questions, but don't let everybody else ask all the questions.

**Quotes: News conference**  
post-game, other



**Media center** **One-on-one interview**



## One-on-one interviews

- Best possible setting: Potentially very intimate, but requires **most research and preparation**
  - Find **original angles**, not covered before
- Advantage is **exclusivity**: Chance for breaking news even during what seemed a routine interview (but – keep your ears open!)
  - Basketball tournament, skimming monies
- Observe *and report about* non-verbal signs
- Observe the **environment**

## Interview types

- The type and setting of the interview influences the type of questions asked:
- **One-on-one** interview: Often longest, done in a conversational tone
- **Small group** interview: Limits the number of follow-up questions
- **News conference**: More general questions; nobody wants to share a potential *scoop* with other reporters!

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## Getting to know...People

- Attend practice and meet people (U.S., Europe).
- Athletes should recognize and be comfortable around the journalist.
  - Quotes, story ideas
- In turn, the journalist must present their viewpoints **fairly**:
  - Coverage need not be always positive, **but**
  - Do not take quotes, conversations out of context

## Secondary sources

- Not vital, but make the article more interesting
- Most common in longer, in-depth stories

Early on, she empowered Kyle. He took the bus by himself to the Flint YMCA during middle school summers, balling with the old heads at noon and the teens later on, napping on the squishy blue mats in between. Shelly McArthur, the director of the Y, recalls a “polite and charming” boy who “you couldn’t really turn away,” even if his membership lapsed at times. “He’d come up and sit up at the front desk and just chitchat with us, these two 40-year-old women,” she says. Kuzma came in with a group that included Monte Morris (who would go on to play for the Nuggets) and Miles Bridges (a rookie this year with the Hornets). They called themselves the Flintstones.

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## Material sources

- Not people but rather record books, media guides, other news stories...
- Also: Roster (=player list), statistical leaders, player biographies and histories... (Usually provided by teams)

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## Behind-the-scenes sources

- **People** who provide information but are not necessarily mentioned in the story
  - Not necessarily primary or even secondary sources:
- Family, childhood friends, roommates, former athletes/teammates...
  - As long as they are knowledgeable, trustworthy and dependable

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## Behind-the-scenes sources

- Often anonymous: “Here is what’s going on, but you didn’t hear it from me.” Why?
- Speaking “off-the-record”
  - Cannot be cited in the story. (Why?)
  - Anonymity must be honored
  - Must verify using other channels!

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## Behind-the-scenes sources

- **Verify!** (At least two independent sources)
  - News value? [is the story important?]
  - Who are the sources? [well-placed?]
  - Verifiable?
  - Reliable?
  - Will *anyone* speak on record?
- Risk of running story with no sources

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## Behind-the-scenes sources

- Often provide story tips:
  - Coach has PhD in physics
  - Suspicious loss, betting pattern
  - Performance-enhancing substance use
- Providing information is risky...But important

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## Interviewing skills

- Interviews and interview question can elicit **information, reaction, emotion**
  - After a game or event
  - Investigative piece on financing sport venues (or...)
- Conduct **multiple** interviews:
  - Obtain information, emotion, background from **multiple** sources
  - **Verify** information

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## Preparing for an interview

- Prepare extensively: you might only have 15'
- Have **at least five** specific questions ready
  - You may digress, **esp.** for follow-up questions
  - Even more important if you speak to a VIP or executive

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## Asking good questions

- Questions that lead to a **colorful response**, **interesting anecdote**, or **useful information**
- **Good questions → good quotes → good info:**
- **Answers** are very seldom better than the **question**
  - Little time preparing – little time answering
- Some guidelines:

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## Avoid obvious questions

- **“How does it feel?”**
- **Has anyone *ever* answered:**
  - “Terrible” after a victory?
  - “You know, [name of journalist], not at all special!”
  - “It’s OK” after a loss?
- They do get bored and tired though!

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## Ask a question!

- **Do not make a statement.**
- “That was an unfortunate loss.”



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## Ask a question!

- **Do not make a statement.**
- “That was an unfortunate loss.”
- “Coach, your forwards played really well in the first half but could not score in the second. The guards did their best, but still could not make up for so many missing rebounds.”
  - “If you say so”
  - “That’s a statement, not a question. Can I get a question?”

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## Ask open-ended questions

- **Yes-no questions** usually lead to yes-no answers
- Valid in **some** cases:
  - “Did Cristiano Ronaldo’s fall in the 25th minute result in an injury?”
  - “Did the defensive player fracture his bone?”

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## Ask open-ended questions

- The **less limiting** the question, the more interesting the response:
  - “Do you like more a coach that is strict, or one that has a more loose approach?”
    - Answer: “I prefer a strict coach.”
    - Better: “What coaching style do you prefer?”

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## Avoid leading questions

- Avoid questions that try to **elicit one type of response**.
- Usually a clue that a reporter has **already decided what to write** and is just looking for a quote to support their angle:  
“Jane, you are probably happy to see a change in the coaching staff, right?”
  - Better: “Jane, what are your thoughts on the changes in the coaching staff?”

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## Ask follow-up questions

- The “original” five questions **do not have to** (and probably **should not**) be the only questions you ask
  - “Ice-breakers” and questions that need to be asked
- Might need to depart after the first question; might need to depart **before** the first!

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## Ask follow-up questions to:

- Clarify a response
- Encourage the source to expand on a thought or anecdote
- Obtain further information: “You said your foot hurts. When did you hurt it?”
- A follow-up might change the course of the interview: “I have been playing injured since the beginning of the season.” → **Sidebar story** about playing through pain.

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From left: Country opera in Bazhou, Hebei; members of Missie like Club in Langfang; artists at Shuang Peasants' Calligraphy and Painting Association; Motorists on the Great Wall.

# TRAVELING YOUR OWN ROAD

More tourists are opting to take road trips, because sometimes the journey is the destination

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**J**umping in the car, winding down the windows and feeling the wind whip through your hair as you hit the open road on a sunny summer day is a feeling like no other.

Road trips have inspired and been the backdrop for many Hollywood blockbuster movies and in the United States are seen, by many, as a national right of passage, or as the comedy *Road Trip* describes it “the greatest college tradition of all”.

Stop at any service station the world over and you are bound to see groups of girls who hit the highway behind ear pop songs stopping to stock up on snacks, or families listening to story tapes and filling their cars with gasoline.

Every road trip has its challenges, whether it's getting lost, arguing over directions or dealing with backseat moans of “are we there yet?”

However, with the freedom to explore where you want and when you want road trips remain one of the most popular holiday choices. As people have become more cash-conscious, they are more popular than ever.

In China, the concept of a road trip as a holiday option is still emerging but it has huge potential, according to Li Jinning, president of the Hebei Self-driving Tourism and RV Camping Association.

Li says last year, there were 3.22 billion journeys made in China and more than half of them, 1.73 billion, were independent driving ones.

Wang's department was responsible for creating the ten travel routes, which he says vary in duration from two to five days and include stops at sites of interest, some of which are off the beaten track.

“Hebei is rich in historic villages and towns with distinct features and are worth visiting. The historic villages and towns in Hebei, I think, are all great. Some self-drive tourists prefer places where few people visit and are not developed much. Others like places that are easy to get to,” he says.

Beijing and Tianjin are two of China's four municipalities and are governed separately from Hebei province, which surrounds the two regions.

However, the three places are working to integrate and coordinate their development to form a globally competitive and influential area following President Xi Jinping's suggestions in February 2014.

This “joint” development includes the travel and tourism industry and both Beijing and Tianjin support the travel routes, with three designed to start in the capital, two in Tianjin and the remaining five in Hebei.

Given China's sheer size, drivers could be put off by the prospect of long, tiresome distances but Wang says Hebei is particularly good for seeing a lot in a short time and that travelers do not have to spend much time behind the wheel.

“We considered the feasibility of the routes. Villages and towns on the routes are near main highways. It is convenient and will not take travelers too much driving time.”

“In Northwest China, you might drive half a day or even a whole day and then find a scenic spot. But villages and towns in the routes can be reached easily and there will be no problem in driving.”

Li says the driving associations

## A peek at ancient Shengfang

The mighty Great Wall, Chongwen and the Eight Outer Temples must be Hebei's biggest tourist hot spots but the province is home to other hidden jewels that are equally worth a journey.

The ancient town of Shengfang is no such site that Wang Jiarui, deputy chief of the marketing department at Hebei Tourism Bureau, particularly recommends.

The walled town, 25 kilometers away from Tianjin to the east and 100 km from Beijing to the north, is a cultural art hub, particularly for festival lanterns, which are made in the town and sold across China and Asia.

Lantern Festival is a particularly magical time to visit Shengfang as the streets are transformed into a stage for performers and are lined with colorful, glowing lanterns.

Other highlights in the town include Shengfang Memorial Archway, Wenchang Pavilion, Shengfang Museum, the Temple of Great Mercy and two courtyard homes, one of which was where Tianjin People's Broadcast Station, Tianjin Daily and the Tianjin branch of Xinhua News agency were established.

The Hebei Tourism Bureau travel routes recommend visiting Shengfang on a two-day trip that incorporates Mengyang Hot Spring holiday village in Langfang city, Yangjioking town in Kiqing district of Tianjin, Bazhou city and the Yin academy of classic learning.

The routes recommend looking in to Shengfang's specialty dishes, which include crab (Jubaer crab) and preserved duck eggs.



Source: China Daily