

RUNNYMEDE

Before Filming

Research

Think of a theme you're interested in – this can be anything you like or which is important to you. You can then do a bit of research on this theme by reading articles, watching Youtube clips or talking to people who know about it, so that you're confident in how to make a film about it.

Preparation

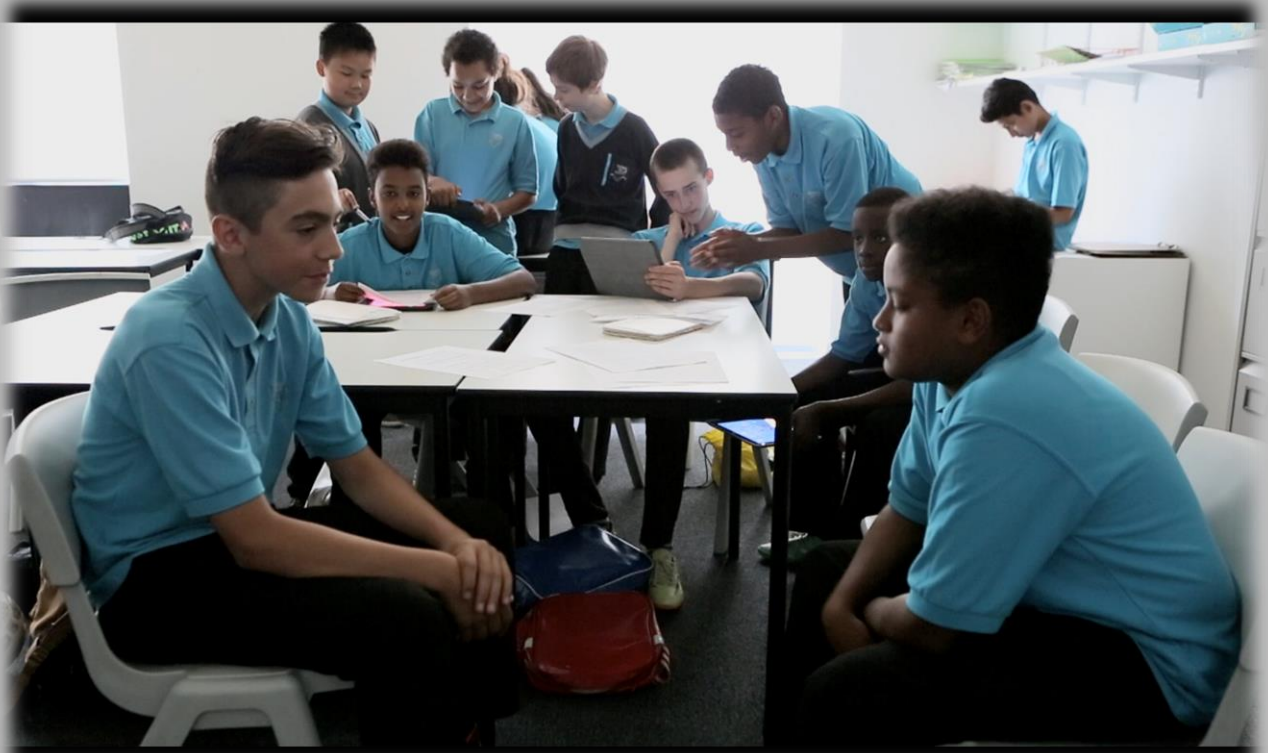
Write a short script or storyboard – this includes the introduction to the interview that you will make as well as the questions you will ask your interviewee(s) and what you will say when closing the interview(s).

Prepare your questions

Think about the type of questions you want to ask your interviewee. What information would you like to have at the end of the interview and what types of questions will best get them to give you the information you're looking for? No need to go crazy. 5-10 questions is usually enough. You can always let your interviewee speak a bit generally as well, if they have extra stuff to say, which doesn't fit your questions.

Your equipment

Always test your equipment – do some test runs with the flip cameras and recorders (or your phone) to check the sound levels for both and the picture quality of the camera. When interviewing, remember to ask permission from your interviewee to record the interview and then place the recorder on a table between you so you can both try to forget that it is there!



The interview

Avoid “yes” or “no” answers

Your questions should be asked in such a way that you won't get “yes” or “no” answers. You need your interviewees to give you interesting answers, which explain why they think certain things, so that you can use it in your video edits. Instead of “Did you like migrating to the UK?” Ask, “What was it like migrating to the UK?”

Be spontaneous

Even though you have prepared questions in advance, be open to changing these during the interview if some unexpected answers come up or if the interviewee says something that you'd like to explore further. Sometimes the unplanned “spontaneous” questions & answers create the best moments. Don't panic if the conversation goes in a random direction and you can always ask the interviewee to explain anything you don't understand or if you think your audience might not understand.

Get the interviewee comfortable

When the camera rolls, ask easy questions to warm them up. Ask them what they had for breakfast, where they are from, how many kids in their family - anything to get them talking and comfortable. This is a key interviewing tip! If the interviewee is relaxed with you they are more likely to share stuff and not just give you one word answers.

Don't give out specific questions in advance

It's fine to give someone a general idea of what the interview will be about, but don't give them your list of questions. If you do, they will try to memorize their answers in advance and you will lose spontaneity and freshness. Your interview will end up feeling stale, unauthentic and rehearsed.

Have them repeat your question

This is a great idea, especially if you plan to have no narration for your documentary. Get the person to repeat back your question in their answer. This will help you with the video editing and storytelling later during the editing process. For example, you ask, “How are you feeling?” The interviewee says, “How am I feeling? I'm feeling excited!”



Proper positioning of interviewee

If you are the person both filming AND interviewing, the person may end up looking into the video camera, which gives the feeling of a personal and direct connection with the person talking. However, the off-camera approach is most common. The interviewer sits or stands right next to the camera so that the interviewee is looking just off camera. You get your best results if the interviewer (you) is standing right next to the camera, that way you can see the full face of the person you're interviewing and not a profile, which can be unattractive and distracting to the viewer as they can't see the eyes and facial expressions of the person talking.

Stay quiet

Stay quiet when the other person is talking. You don't want to hear yourself in the background (stop yourself saying "hmm" or "oh right.." as you will hear it on your final recording). Just ask the question and then keep quiet. It's good to nod, and make gentle facial expressions, so your interviewee feels at ease. Obviously if you are part of the story too and the camera has both of you in the shot, it's fine to speak!

Ask for final comment

At the end of the interview, always ask the person if they have any final thoughts. Ask them if there was anything you missed. This can sometimes bring out some great information you hadn't thought to ask about.

Don't stop filming when the interview is "over"

Especially when you have someone who is nervous and never got quite comfortable with the interview. When you're done with your official questions, say "OK, that's the end of the interview." Make sure the camera continues to roll at this point because often the conversation will continue. Psychologically, the person no longer feels the "pressure" of the interview and will loosen up. This is the time you often get the best quotes of the interview!

