

Washington State Child Interview Guide: Quick Reference

Interview Stages & Components

Introduction	Introduce yourself; Neutral job description; Explain documentation & observers
Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◇ “Don’t guess.” Practice: “What’s my dog’s name?”◇ “Tell me if I make a mistake.” Practice: “What would you say if I said you were 30 years old?”◇ “Tell me if you don’t know what I mean.” Practice: “How many siblings do you have?”◆ “I don’t know the answers to my questions.”
Truth-Lie Discussion	<p>Elicit an agreement to tell the truth - “Do you promise that you <u>will</u> tell the truth today?”</p> <p>Explore truth/lie <i>competency</i> if <u>required</u> by your prosecutor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Understands concepts (<i>scenario example</i>)2) Understands it’s wrong to lie
Narrative <u>Event</u> Practice	Elicit neutral event narratives , practice open-ended questioning techniques & pattern of questions, build rapport Pay attention to child’s use of language to gauge developmental level & adjust accordingly
Transition	Start with: “Tell me why you’re here today.” As needed, follow with, “It’s really important that we know everything that happened.” (Additional prompts should be the least suggestive possible)
Substantive Questions	<p>SEPARATE: Separate incidents to focus on 1 at a time: “Tell me all about the last ,1st, time you remember the most”</p> <p>INVITE: Use open ended prompts to generate initial narrative overview</p> <p>ELABORATE: Request elaboration w/open-ended prompts to elicit additional narratives (& details)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Linear/sequential: “Tell me more about ____.” “Then what happened?” Time segmentation & time framing</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Action Cues (using actions mentioned by child)</p> <p>FOCUS: Explore key details further - sensory focus, people, places, etc. Pair focused questions or cued invitations with open-ended follow-ups</p> <p>CLARIFY: Address unclear or confusing information</p>
Closure	Recap in child’s words to ensure accuracy; Thank child for effort, not content

Examples: Helpful Questions & Invitations

- Narrative Practice** ♦ *“I’d like to get to know you better—tell me about things you like to do.”* THEN focus on a recent related **event**:
“Tell me everything that happened from the beginning to the end of [your last soccer game, the 1st day of school, etc.]”
- ♦ *“Tell me something you did this week that made you happy.”* *“Start at the beginning & tell me all everything that happened.”*
- ♦ *“What’s your favorite place to go? Tell me everything that happened the last time you went there.”*
- OR** ♦ *“Tell me everything that happened today, from when you woke up, until you got here.”*
- THEN use **PATTERN OF QUESTIONS** to elicit narratives that provide details: **Invite, Elaborate, Focus, Clarify**

- Transition**
- ◇ *“Tell me why you’re here today.”* *“It’s really important that we know everything that happened.”*
- ◇ *“Why do you think I wanted to talk to you?”* *“What did ____ tell you about talking to me today?”*
- ◇ *“Did someone [talk to you about/tell you] what I wanted to talk to you about?”*
- ◇ *“I heard something might have happened. Tell me what happened.”*
- ◇ **If previous statement:** *“I heard you talked to [name] about something that happened. Tell me what happened.”*
- ◇ **If observable injury:** *“I see you have [a burn, a cut, a bandage, bruises, etc.]. Tell me everything about that.”*
- ◇ **Someone’s worried:** *“Is ____ worried about something that happened? Tell me what ____ is worried about.”*
- ◇ **Bothered you:** *“I heard someone might have bothered you. Tell me what happened.”*
- ◇ **Something that wasn’t right:** *“I heard someone may have done something that wasn’t right. Tell me about that.”*

Substantive Questions

Use **PATTERN OF QUESTIONS** to elicit narratives that provide details: **Separate, Invite, Elaborate, Focus, Clarify**

- ♦ *“Tell me everything about [child’s words], from the beginning to the end.”*
- ♦ *“You said ____ - tell me more about ____.”* *“Then what happened?”* *“What happened next, after ____?”*
- ♦ *“Tell me everything that happened from ____ until ____.”*
- ♦ *“How do you know?”* *“How did you figure that out?”*
- ♦ *“Think about what it looked/sounded like.”* *“Tell me everything you saw/heard.”*
- ♦ *“How did that make you feel?”* *“What were you thinking when ____?”* *“How did that make your body feel?”*
- ♦ *“You said _____, tell me all about that.”* *“I heard something about _____. Tell me all about that.”*
- ♦ *“I’m confused, tell me again.”*

Closure

- ◇ *“Is there something else you want to tell me right now?”*