

This information is taken from my online interviewing course. However, it's also helpful to us. Some of this information may be repeated later on, but that's ok as repetition is useful for remembering.

Becoming Aware of Topics and Issues

Ex-BBC and Al Jazeera news anchor, Nouran Sallam gives us advice on listening for ideas.

We'll talk about questioning subjects.

We'll discuss social media and forums to help you source further ideas.

Becoming Aware

Start becoming aware of subjects that interest you. While this advice seems like basic fluff, it's very relevant. I want you to become aware of what's getting your attention. If something catches your interest, note it down. Also, note down the interesting stories that you're reading as well. If you're interested in something, it means you care about it. And caring about a subject is the first step in finding a good idea. Once you tap into your passions, you'll then want to share those same passions with similar people.

Listen For Ideas

Nouran Sallam is a TV presenter on Al Hayah TV. In the past, she's been a news anchor for BBC Arabic Radio, BBC Arabic TV, and Al Jazeera news. When I interviewed her for my "[Discover the Secrets to Successful Media Interviews](#)" course, she talked to me about the importance of listening. While her advice is for students interested in media interviewing, it's still relevant for us.

“Most of us have a favourite show that we like, but you need to listen to various channels. If you're serious about pursuing a career, then you must leave your comfort zone. Don't just stay tuned to one channel. If you're a sports fanatic, then don't just tune into Radio 5 Live or talkSPORT. Make a point of including Radio 4 (for news) and LBC (which teaches you how to handle phone-ins). Even if you're not religious, you should still listen to programmes on religious broadcasters. A unique point of view can give you a different perspective. A different perspective can lead to new ideas.”

Asking Questions on Subjects That Interest You

What topics capture your attention?

What things do you care about?

What's taking your interest right now?

What are you reading online now? Why are you reading it?
What tweets grab your attention? Why are you clicking on them?
What Facebook posts arouse your curiosity?
What are you watching on YouTube / TV?
What questions do you ask yourself? What answers are you seeking?
Why am I telling my friend this story about "X"? What initially got me interested in this?
Why is my friend's story on "Y" interesting to me?
What questions do you ask your family and friends?

Tip

Actively note what you discuss with your family and friends.
Get into the habit of asking yourself: Why is this interesting to me?

Using Emotion for Ideas

Think about what's making you feel excited, fume with anger or sad. Is there an injustice out there, a wrong that needs to be corrected? Is there an issue that you're passionate about, which you feel is being ignored? Can you help change a situation by making people aware of it?

Forums / Social Media

Look at forums in the areas of interest that you've found. If people are discussing your topic, they may also be asking questions. Answering questions is a good way to get story ideas. Just type "subject" + forum / "subject" + discussion board into Google.

Example

"Radio" forum / "radio" discussion board.

You can also try <https://www.quora.com> and <https://uk.answers.yahoo.com>

Type in your question and see what answers come up.

Find popular blog posts on your subject. If anything interests you, feel free to contact the blog writers for more information. If you have a similar passion, they'll probably want to help you share that passion as well.

Tip

Look in the comments sections on sites and see what kinds of questions people are asking. Look at books on Amazon / YouTube videos on the subjects. Check the comment sections for questions / frustrations.

Use Twitter hashtags (#sexyauthor) and search for general topic areas at first. Look at what people are discussing. What's making them happy, angry or worried? What questions are they asking?

Join groups on Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Reddit, etc. Get involved with the discussions. What's making them excited? See what people are posting and see what questions they're asking. Make a note of the answers they're seeking. Find out what they want. Ask them if they think anything is missing.

Look at what's trending on social media.

<http://whatstrending.com/>

Alltop

A free site where you can search for topic ideas.

Pinterest

You can get some good ideas from Pinterest. Enter your subject search and see what comes up. Pinterest will show you what's trending, and you can save the topics to your board, which is handy.

Reddit

Reddit can be a good source of information.

Look at local websites, social media posts, and read local newspapers. Follow groups on social media, check out their websites and see what's making them passionate. Even if it's an international story, there may be a local level to it, a local office with local volunteers.

Record It All Down

Record everything that comes into your head no matter how silly it seems. Has there been anything online that has taken your interest lately? Record it down. Anything on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.? Record it down. Twitter is great for information. The same goes for Facebook. Get into social media.

Become an Active Listener

During your day, talk to as many people as you can. It's at this level where you can find real ideas. However, try to let people finish their sentences before you reply. Becoming an active

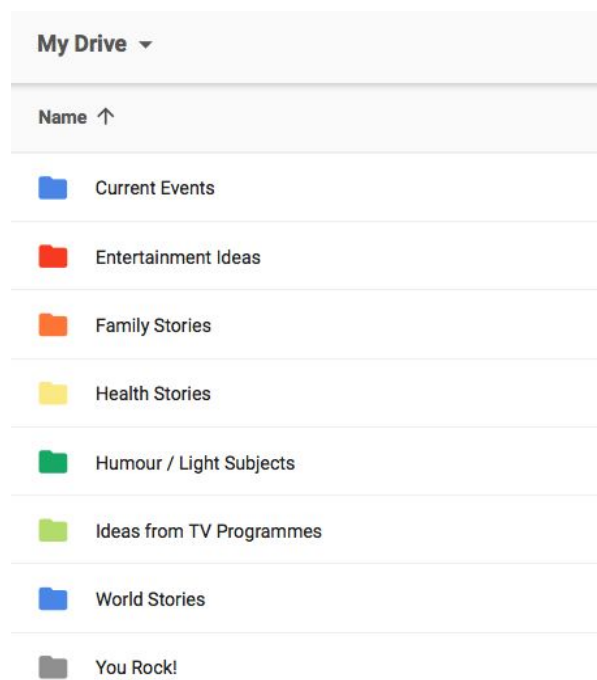
listener is important. It can be an easy way to find ideas. In most conversations, most of us, (myself included) don't listen to the other person when they're speaking. We're more concerned with how we're going to reply. We try to hurry the conversation along, or we'll try to finish their sentences for them. But how can you listen to someone when you're talking to them? Be patient. Let the other person finish before you reply.

Tip

Log all the questions and issues you overhear. One day you may be able to use them for an idea.

Storing Ideas

Create a Google doc file (this way you'll be able to access it online from anywhere using your mobile phone). Store all your interests / rough ideas / newspaper stories etc. into separate folders.



Recap

Start by making a note of everything that arouses your interest.

Store these interests in a special folder. If you store them in Google docs, you'll be able to access these folders on your mobile phone.

Join groups and forums and see what they're discussing. Look at the questions they're asking and look at the problems they're facing.