



Interviewing Tips

When interviewing Spanish-speakers,...

- Consider using the metric system for comparison to be clear about details such as height, weight and distances.
- If communication is a problem, gesture height and girth with your hands.
- Use human models—ask your witness to look around at other people and pick the person closest to the suspect in weight, age, hair type, color of skin, and other identifying characteristics.
- Show pictures of faces and body types to help the witness describe a suspect. Keep pictures handy of car makes and models and catalogues of other things you need witnesses to identify.
- When asking Hispanic witnesses for a description of someone, don't ask for the person's "sex" (*sexo*). Instead, ask if the person they saw was a man (*hombre*) or woman (*mujer*); boy (*chico*) or girl (*chica*).
- Pose a series of yes/no and either/or questions to a witness with limited English skills to help refine a physical description. For example, was the suspect... big or small? fat or thin? white or black? dark or light-skinned? tall or short, etc. Was he or she driving a car, truck or van? Two-door or four door? Dark or light color? Use the handout provided below to help narrow down the details.
- When taking phone numbers from Spanish-speakers, expect them to give you the numbers in pairs. When giving a phone number to a Spanish-speaker with poor English skills, use single digits to make it easier for them to understand. Show them the phone number you've written down to verify its accuracy

When interviewing seniors,...

- Ask questions and give explanations in clear, basic language in either English or Spanish.
- Repeat questions in a variety of ways using alternative terms in case your vocabulary choices may be unfamiliar to them.
- Written materials should be in large print in case they have vision problems. Also, small print on legal forms will seem more suspicious to them, especially if they must sign their signature. Explain carefully and reassure them frequently

- Use gestures, pictures and visual cues. Some may be illiterate in either language.
- Enlist the senior's family members or companions to help explain matters. They will also help to advise the senior.
- Show patience to match the slower pace of the senior.
- Explain the beneficial role of the legal system or institution you represent. Many Latinos have a distrust of government organizations.
- Smile. A smile is welcoming. Just avoid smiling *after* the senior answers your questions—this could seem condescending.
- Shake hands before and after the interview. Accompany the senior to the exit as a sign of respect.
- Don't expect seniors to respond to your instructions if you need them to follow up with you. Use a family member or caretaker as a contact person to manage this. If you need them to contact you again, provide them or the caretaker with a written phone number and contact information. They are unlikely to seek out this information on their own.

When interviewing Latino males,...

- Appeal to their sense of paternalism and address their concerns in protecting their families.
- Avoid insulting their sense of machismo and don't highlighting their weaknesses. This may mean having a male officer interview them. It may also mean acknowledging their misogynistic attitudes.

When interviewing Latina females,...

- Consider removing males before conducting the interview. Latino males who play a dominant family role may be overly protective, judgmental or worse, they may be perpetrators. Only female officers should conduct interviews involving issues of a sexual nature or anything challenging the woman's sense of modesty.
- Appeal to their caretaker role, especially if they have children. This may mean having a female officer with children interview them. Bond over their concern for their children and/or their responsibilities toward spouse and parents.