



shado's
ethical
interviewing
guidelines



shado is a lived experience-led community of artists, activists, writers, organisers and everything in between, united in the fight for collective liberation. We publish journalism that provides critical and community-centred analyses of a range of topics including politics, activism, arts and culture, opinions, and profiles. This is created across mediums, from video explainers, to podcasts, to long-form written pieces.

As such, much of what we publish contains interviews. In line with our commitment to pursuing sustainable – rather than extractivist – journalism, and work which uplifts causes and communities, below are a list of guidelines we would like all those who work with shado to try and uphold.

Due to our coverage of social justice topics, there are often situations where you might be interviewing people who are more vulnerable to various pressures such as insecure immigration status or lack of political safety. As such, our approach is one which is deeply rooted in care and respect for lived experience and lays the foundation for nuanced reporting.

These may be slightly different to conditions you are used to working under, so please, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with our editorial team.

Why is this important?

As an industry, journalism has a tendency to operate in a 'helicopter' manner.

By this, we mean a journalist who enters a community without an adequate grasp of the stakes for those being interviewed, and then fails to maintain longer-term relationships with sources and their movements.

At best, this can lead to misrepresentation; at worst, this can be dangerous for those involved. It can also lead to extractive and transactional one-sided relationships which replicate harmful structures and power dynamics.

At shado, we hope to build more sustainable, meaningful and reciprocal relationships between interviewers and interviewees. This not only helps get the whole story across in a way that is both factual and representative, but helps build coalitions across the left and supports a healthier, trust-based and more effective media ecosystem.



The process

When thinking of approaching someone for interview

Consider your positionality and motivations for conducting the interview.

- Are you well positioned to be writing about this subject?

- Do you have enough knowledge and understanding of the nuances and sensitivities required to tell this story with care?
- Is this an opportunity to pass this assignment to a peer who is better positioned to write about the topic?
- Will this interview support the person you are interviewing, or are your motivations driven by personal career ambition?



Approaching someone for interview

Do your research.

- Part of the process of getting a great interview is trust building. This can be most effectively done by showing you have made the effort to research the situation/person prior to contacting them.
- Make sure that the person you are speaking to is best positioned to speak on the topic. Some organisations will have media-trained representatives they prefer press to speak with; others may avoid having a figurehead to reduce the risk associated with speaking on 'taboo' topics.
- Try and verify someone's position prior to speaking to them, and always speak to a shado editor if you're unclear.

Once you have located your interviewee(s) it is important to be very clear about what you are asking of them and to avoid over-promising. Consider the following:

- Has the piece already been commissioned by shado? If this is an enquiry to source background information or to check interest, make sure this is clearly stated.
- Introduce shado and provide links to our site and socials.
- Be realistic about the time commitment you are asking of them.
- Clarify how they will be represented in the finished piece. Are you looking for a short quote, or is this a full-feature?

- Include as much detail as possible in your initial outreach. What will you be asking about? Who else are you speaking to? What format will the final piece take? How will it be shared?
- shado does not compensate interviewees to avoid conflicts of interest. However, a main pillar of shado is to empower people to tell their own stories, and there is a potential for interviewees to be compensated for producing their own work (i.e. pitching and writing a first-person piece).

If you have any questions about this, please contact your shado editor.

- Show that you are willing to do the leg-work. Interviewees are giving up their time, so make it clear that you will conduct the interview in the best format for them. This could be via email, WhatsApp or over video call. Especially if in person, reiterate that it can also be at a time and a place that suits them. Also make it clear that they can bring someone along to the interview if they wish.
- Offer anonymity as an option. Let folks know they may request this, see the questions beforehand, and read the piece prior to publication.



Just before the interview

Recap who you are, who shado is, and the purpose of the interview.

- Explain what you mean by on and off record.
- Clarify that they do not have to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable, and that they can also stop the interview at any time.

- Double-check that your recording system is working! Tech mishaps are common, but avoidable with pre-planning. You don't want to go back to your interviewee and ask them to re-do the interview.
- Explain that you will be recording the interview and outline how the recording will be used. Is it solely for transcribing, or will the audio be used later?

Immediately after the interview

Explain that interviewees will have a chance to read over the interview prior to publication. This is not for revising answers so they're more PR-friendly, but to ensure the interviewee is represented authentically and safely.

- Let them know when they can expect the piece to be published. If publication is pushed-back, please do your best to relay as to why. A shado editor can also do this in your place.
- If possible, share the illustrations that will accompany the piece and ask for their feedback.

After the interview

We encourage cultivating a sustained relationship with everyone we interview.



- This means we aim to keep in touch with organisations and individuals so they can update us on anniversaries, actions, or developments they may want reported on. We understand if this is not something you would like to maintain personally; however, please ensure they have shado's contact details so we can keep this relationship ongoing.

We recognise that following these guidelines may mean that your piece takes a little longer to put together. At shado, we are largely an evergreen publication that prioritises **working in line** with our process and social commitments, rather than producing work in a reactive manner. This will be reflected in the deadlines we provide, however please don't hesitate to get in contact if you would like support with any of the above at any stage.

