

# Podcast Interview Mastery — Workbook

This workbook translates the course frameworks into hands-on practice you can apply before, during, and after every interview. Complete each section in sequence the first time through; on subsequent episodes, use it as a rapid pre- and post-production checklist. Every template is designed to be reused for each new guest.

## Guest Research and Pre-Interview Preparation

Build your systematic research habit and produce a one-page guest brief before every recording session.

### Exercise: Source Triangulation Sprint

Choose an upcoming or hypothetical guest. Spend 90 minutes completing a three-tier research sprint using the time allocations below. Write your single most surprising finding at the end — this finding will anchor your top three questions.

- Tier 1 (45 min) — Primary sources: List every piece of primary content you reviewed (podcast episodes, articles, talks, books, posts) with a one-sentence insight from each.  
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- Tier 2 (27 min) — Secondary sources: What is the dominant public narrative about this guest? What story does every interviewer tell? Write it in 2–3 sentences.  
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- Tier 3 (18 min) — Tertiary sources: What do audiences want to know but no host has asked? Scan reviews, comments, and forums. List three audience frustrations or curiosities.  
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- Most surprising finding: Write one sentence describing the gap, contradiction, or unexplored angle your research revealed.  
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### Worksheet: Pre-Interview Brief Builder

Complete every field below to generate a one-page brief you will send to the guest 48 hours before recording. Keep total length to one page when formatted.

Guest full name and primary title/role  
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Your show name and target audience (2–3 sentences)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Recording format (remote/in-person) and expected duration  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Territory area 1 (theme, not question)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Territory area 2 (theme, not question)  
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Territory area 3 (theme, not question)  
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Off-limit topics (to confirm with guest)

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Platform link and technical checklist items

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Pre-call date and time (10-minute rapport call)

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### Checklist: Research Completion Checklist

- Completed at least 2 hours of Tier 1 primary source review
- Listened to or read at least 2 other podcast/media interviews with this guest
- Searched Listen Notes for all previous podcast appearances
- Set a Google Alert for the guest's name
- Identified and documented the dominant public narrative to avoid
- Mined at least one tertiary source (reviews, forums, comments) for audience questions
- Captured the single most surprising finding in one sentence
- Drafted the unexplored angle as a single target sentence
- Completed and sent the pre-interview brief at least 48 hours before recording
- Scheduled or completed the 10-minute pre-call

## Question Architecture and the Interview Arc

Design your full question set using the funnel framework and practice follow-up moves before you go live.

### Worksheet: Funnel Question Planner

For your next interview, write 12–15 questions distributed across the four funnel layers. Mark your top 8–10 with a star. For each Layer 4 question, note what trust signal would indicate the guest is ready for it.

Layer 1 — Context question 1 (open, low-stakes)

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Layer 1 — Context question 2

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Layer 1 — Context question 3

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Layer 2 — Challenge question 1 (friction, failure, reversal)

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Layer 2 — Challenge question 2

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Layer 2 — Challenge question 3

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Layer 3 — Insight question 1 (frameworks, mental models, lessons)

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Layer 3 — Insight question 2

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Layer 3 — Insight question 3

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Layer 4 — Provocation question 1 (bold, stake-a-position)

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Layer 4 — Provocation question 2

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Layer 4 — Trust signal required before asking provocation questions

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Closing sentence-completion prompt (tailored to this episode's theme)

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Recommended resource question (specific to episode theme)

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### Exercise: Follow-Up Muscle Builder

Select any 10-minute segment from a podcast interview you admire. Listen and pause after each guest answer. Before pressing play again, write the follow-up question you would have asked. Compare your question to what the host actually asked. Repeat for 5 exchanges.

- Exchange 1 — Guest answer summary (1 sentence): What follow-up did you write? What did the host actually ask? Which is more specific?

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- Exchange 2 — Guest answer summary: Your follow-up vs. host's follow-up. Did the host use a probe, bridge, or pivot? Which would you have used?

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- Exchange 3 — Identify one moment where the host could have used strategic silence instead of a follow-up question. What would silence have produced?

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- After 5 exchanges: What is the single follow-up technique you most need to develop? Write a one-sentence commitment for your next recording session.

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### Checklist: Pre-Recording Question Review

Every question begins with an open-ended stem (Walk me through, Describe, Tell me about, How did you decide)

No question can be answered with yes or no

Each question includes a specific anchor (date, decision, product, or quote)

Questions are distributed across all four funnel layers

Top 8–10 questions are starred; extras are available as insurance

Closing sentence-completion prompt is written and tailored to this episode

At least one follow-up probe, bridge, and pivot have been mentally prepared

No question opens with a flattery framing

Contradictions or gaps from research are referenced in at least one question

## Active Listening and On-Mic Presence

Measure and improve your listening habits and vocal presence through structured self-assessment across multiple recording sessions.

### Exercise: Filler Word Audit

Record yourself speaking for exactly 10 minutes on any topic (a practice interview, a summary of your last episode, or a test recording). Transcribe using Descript or Otter.ai. Count each instance of every filler word category below. Record your baseline, then repeat after 4 recording sessions to track improvement.

- Count filler words by category: Um/Uh total, Like total, You know total, Basically/Literally/Honestly total, Uptalk instances (statements ending as questions). Record your total filler rate per minute.

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- Identify your top two filler words by count. For each, write one replacement strategy (e.g., substitute silence, substitute a breath, rephrase the sentence structure that triggers it).

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- Listen back to a recent episode at 1.25x speed. List three moments where your question setup was longer

than 10 words and rewrite each setup to 10 words or fewer.

- Set a specific numeric target: reduce your top filler word count by 50% in the next 4 sessions. Write the target count here.

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### Worksheet: Episode Self-Assessment Tracker

Complete this worksheet within 48 hours of every episode you record. Track across episodes to observe patterns and set one targeted improvement per episode.

Episode date and guest name

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Average question length (count words in your 5 longest questions; average them)

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Number of times you interrupted the guest mid-sentence

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Number of times you answered your own question before the guest responded

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Total filler words per minute (count a 5-minute segment and multiply)

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Number of times you used strategic silence (5+ seconds without speaking)

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Most effective follow-up question you asked (write it out)

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Moment where a probe, bridge, or pivot would have improved the conversation

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One specific improvement target for the next recording session

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### Checklist: Technical Setup Pre-Session Checklist

- Recording platform configured for separate local-track WAV/FLAC capture
- Guest join-link tested and confirmed working before session
- Microphone positioned 4–6 inches from mouth, on-axis
- Headphones on (both host and guest confirmed)
- Room treated: closet, wardrobe, or duvet behind you
- 30-second audio check completed: no clipping, no room echo, background noise below -60 dBFS
- Recording level peaks between -18 and -12 dBFS (not clipping above -3 dBFS)
- Video recording enabled even if publishing audio only
- Backup recording started (phone memo app or secondary device as safety net)
- Guest reminded to silence phone notifications and close browser tabs

## Editing and Producing the Final Episode

Work through each editing pass, apply the Story Spine, and produce the complete publishing package for every episode.

### Worksheet: Story Spine Episode Map

Before beginning your content cut, map your raw transcript to the six Story Spine beats. Write the approximate timestamp and a 1–2 sentence summary for each beat. This map becomes your edit roadmap. Once upon a time (ordinary world) — timestamp range and summary

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Every day (status quo) — timestamp range and summary

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Until one day (inciting incident) — timestamp and summary (must appear before 15-minute mark)

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Because of that (rising action) — timestamp range and summary

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Until finally (climax) — timestamp and summary

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Ever since then (new world / lesson) — timestamp range and summary

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Does the current sequence match the Story Spine order? If not, which beats need reordering?

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Cold-open clip candidate: timestamp and transcript of best 30–60 second exchange

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### Exercise: Three-Pass Edit Walkthrough

Apply the three-pass editing method to your next raw recording. Complete each pass fully before starting the next. Record your time and cut percentage at each pass.

- Pass 1 — Content cut (transcript read-through): How many minutes of content did you identify for removal? What was the main reason for each major cut (repetition, tangent, false start, off-topic)? Record start duration, cut duration, and new total.

- Pass 2 — Filler removal (Descript automated + manual review): How many filler-word removals did Descript suggest? How many did you accept vs. reject? What was your acceptance rate? Did you find any emotional hesitations the AI wrongly flagged?

- Pass 3 — Pacing listen at 1.25x: How many additional cuts did you make after the pacing listen? List each cut and the pacing reason. What is the final episode length?

- Final check: Is information density approximately one specific point per 60–90 seconds? Is filler rate below 2 per minute? Write your final episode length and cut percentage from raw.

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### Checklist: Publishing Package Checklist

- Episode title includes guest name and specific insight (not generic)
- Show notes are 300–500 words with 3–5 target keywords
- All resources mentioned in episode are linked in show notes
- Chapter markers placed at every Story Spine transition (6–8 chapters minimum)
- Chapter names are listener-value statements (not timestamps)
- 60-second audiogram clip selected and produced (caption accuracy above 85%)

- [ ] Audiogram exported in both square (1080x1080) and vertical (1080x1920) formats
- [ ] Custom episode artwork includes guest photo
- [ ] Explicit/clean tag set correctly
- [ ] Guest social handles included in credits/description field
- [ ] Episode scheduled for publication and audiogram queued for social within 24 hours

## Your Action Plan

1. Select your next guest and complete the three-tier source triangulation sprint (90 minutes) before drafting any questions
2. Write your unexplored angle as a single target sentence; anchor your top three questions to that sentence
3. Draft and send the pre-interview brief at least 48 hours before recording; schedule the 10-minute pre-call
4. Complete the Funnel Question Planner worksheet; star your top 8–10 questions and prepare one probe, bridge, and pivot in advance
5. Run the Filler Word Audit on a 10-minute practice recording; set a numeric reduction target for your next session
6. Configure your recording platform for separate local-track WAV capture and run the full technical setup checklist before every session
7. Within 48 hours of recording, map your raw transcript to the Story Spine before opening Descript
8. Apply the three-pass editing method in sequence (content cut, filler removal, pacing listen) and record your cut percentage each time
9. Produce the complete publishing package: show notes, chapter markers, audiogram clip, and metadata before scheduling publication
10. Complete the Episode Self-Assessment Tracker within 48 hours of every episode; set one measurable improvement target per episode and track it across 20 episodes











