



COULD I PULL OFF A SUIT?
PROBABLY NOT...

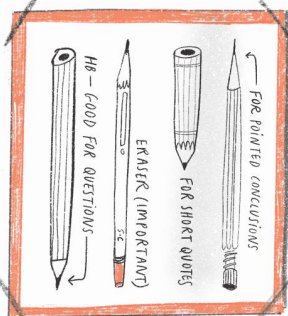
STARTING OUR STORY

First you must decide what exactly you are reporting on, and why it is important. In my early career, fresh out of Newspaper School, I wrote many stories that

were important to me, but not so much everyone else (See 'A Not So Brief History of Khakis'). Your story should be necessary and relevant to your readers, revealing information that is crucial to them. So, let us begin with some starting points:

- Are strange things happening?
- Is someone acting suspiciously?
- Do you have reason to believe the truth is being compromised?

YES!



After you have answered these questions, you must find your way in. An excellent technique is INTERVIEWS.

in bunk?

HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

The best reports include other people's stories too. You never know what new and interesting perspective they may lend, or what vital clues they are privy to.

Provide a calm setting for your interview. This may include biscuits.

Start with small talk to put your interviewee at ease - this will often lead to more interesting topics. Don't be afraid of silences. You can simply nod. Write everything down.

TIPS FOR REMAINING PROFESSIONAL

Make sure you have eaten well. An empty stomach equals poor judgement.

Use pencil, not a pen. You can make mistakes just like everybody else.

WORK ON SPELLING

Catherine Rodriguez

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CHAPTER THREE

By eleven thirty-six that morning, Kate's bunk was no longer a bunk. It was a detective booth.

First to be questioned were the twins from Compartment No. 6: Chloe and Zoe. Their bright red plaits were so long they could sit on them, but right now they were chewing on the ends nervously.

'We were both in our compartment last night,' said Zoe.

‘Yes,’ said Chloe.

‘What were you doing?’ asked Kate.

‘Nothing, really.’

‘Nothing at all?’ asked Kate.

‘No,’ said Chloe. ‘I mean . . . Yes.’

‘You just said “No”, Chloe,’ said Kate, who was beginning to suspect she might be looking forward to an illustrious career in detective work.

‘Yes,’ said Chloe.

‘No, she didn’t,’ said Zoe. She poked Chloe with the wet end of her plait.

‘Oh, we might as well just tell her,’ sighed Chloe.

‘Fine,’ said Zoe. ‘Although you have to promise not to tell anyone, Kate.’

Kate solemnly placed her hand on *The*

Special Correspondent Manual. ‘You have my word.’

‘We’re running away to join the circus,’ said Chloe coolly. ‘I know it’s a cliché, but what else are we supposed to do? It’s not as if there is a circus at home in the Hebrides. Last night we were practising our routine.’

‘I see,’ said Kate, secretly very impressed. ‘And do you need anything for this routine? Trophies to prove you’re Hebridean champions? Biscuits for . . . um . . . sustenance?’

‘Nope, the only thing we’ve ever stolen are utensils from Granny’s kitchen,’ said Zoe. ‘We experimented with a bit of knife juggling, but Chloe got annoyed when her finger was chopped off.’

‘What can I say?’ Chloe shrugged.
‘I can be dramatic. Now our act is mainly plait-oriented. Skipping, lassoing, performative crocheting – that sort of thing.’

‘I see,’ said Kate again, nodding as if she was very In The Know with circus talk.

There was no motive here, she thought gloomily, pencilling a giant red X next to Rupert’s drawing of the twins, before seeing them out.

Next was Simon the Conductor-in-Training.

‘How long have you been training for, Simon?’

‘Three years, six months and forty-five



days,' he replied cheerfully.

'That's a long time to be in training . . .'

Kate said.

Simon shrugged. 'Well, I'm doing the best I can – and there's a lot that needs to be done around here, you know.'

Kate thought back to Simon's cooking

and silently agreed. But back to business.
It was time to turn up the heat.

‘And what –’ Kate lowered her voice for maximum impact – ‘were you doing last night at the time Miss Bonbon’s trophies went missing?’

‘Reading.’

‘A book isn’t a very good alibi.’

‘Oh, Kate, you’re just so clever!’ interrupted a beaming Dad from the corner of the compartment where he was refolding their towels into origami animals. ‘Who would have thought you’d grow into such a sophisticated –’

‘Dad! I’m investigating!’

‘Oops! Didn’t mean to interrupt!’

Time for one last question.

‘What were you reading?’


‘*Trains: What They Are and How to Work Them.* It’s been a real life-saver! Did you know this thing runs on steam?’

Last was the Russian priest. He had a kind face, and was keen to point out that stealing was a ‘bit of a no-no’ when you’re a priest.

‘Plus,’ he admitted in a whisper, ‘I’m gluten-free, so no ginger biscuits for me! Nothing clears out a congregation faster than a surprise visit from the unholy ghost!’

‘What does he mean?’ asked Rupert quietly.

‘A fart, Rupert,’ said Kate. ‘He’s talking about a fart.’



But just as he was about to leave, the priest turned back.

‘You might find this useful,’ he said vaguely. ‘Something mildly suspicious happened to me this morning.’

Kate leaned in. ‘Yes?’

‘I woke to find my Ancient Scrolls were gone.’

‘WHAT?’ said Kate. Another theft!

‘Why didn’t you tell us sooner?’

‘Earthly possessions aren’t really top of my list,’ said the priest. ‘I’ve got them memorised, you see –

although of course

I have been praying for their imminent return.’



‘This is huge, Rupert,’ muttered Kate, scribbling as fast as she could manage. ‘Was there anything at the scene of the crime?’ she asked the priest.

‘Nothing really,’ said the priest. ‘I probably bought them in on my slippers.’

‘Bought what in?’ said Kate.

‘The whiskers.’

‘That settles it, Roo,’ said Kate as soon as they were alone again. ‘Who do we know with whiskers?’

‘Master Mimkins!’ breathed Rupert.

‘Exactly. *And* Madame Maude is refusing to be questioned. If that’s not suspicious, I don’t know what is. I think we’re going to have to employ some serious sneakery.’