



IN BUSINESS

Questions, Questions, Questions

BY TODD OLIVAS

The Q&A website www.ReadBack.org offers reporters the chance to ask questions and then for viewers to rate the responses. Here are a few questions and the highest rated answers.

Do you correct witnesses when they, say, shake their head, point instead of describe, or say "uhhuh"? Or do you think that is the attorney's job and not your problem? I always cringe on the inside when a witness does these things, but I don't really know if I should point it out to the attorneys or just take it down the best I can.

*Evangeline Langston, RPR, CRI
Brooklyn, New York*

After 287 views and eight responses, the current "Best Answer" with 11 votes:

I don't usually correct the witness. But there have been times when I'm writing with my eyes closed, hanging on by the seat of my pants. We all know what I'm talking about. And the attorney will have blurted out two or three questions, and I won't know for sure if the witness didn't answer or if he did, I might have missed it under the barrage.

In those cases, I'll either blurt, "What? I didn't hear a verbal answer." At which time the attorney will either remind the witness or will say, "I heard it," and repeat it for the witness. I could have misheard or might not have heard it, or sometimes the attorney may have thought he heard it when the witness did some head bob or inarticulate noise. But generally I don't say anything.

*Kyung Lee-Green
Irvine, Calif*

How do you feel about reporters having a tattoo or a facial piercing? Obviously not covered, but a discrete piercing or tattoo?

*Tania S. Koven
Palm Desert, Calif*

After 593 views and 12 responses, the

current "Best Answer" with 16 votes:

Good Q! Well, I may be a little biased because I do have a nose ring. And I have a tattoo, where no one can see. I admit, I was a little wary the first time my calendar manager saw me in person right after I got it, but I, personally, feel it's very classy, while at the same time expressing my individuality.

My career is part of my life. My life is not my career. That being said, I am not judgmental of others. You have to fail my expectations first before I doubt you. I am very capable and professional at my job. If someone were to complain or not want to "see me around" because I have a very pretty, feminine, classy diamond stud expressing my individuality, I would first invite them to observe my reporting skill, which is the reason I'm there.

I have seen attorneys with tats. One was a former model (very pretty!) with tattoos all over her feet and ankles (and she didn't wear hose — she was just that model-esse!) I didn't think less of her. To be frank, I thought, "What is she doing at this crappy law firm... lol!"

I recently met a first-year reporter who happened to be wearing a tank top and had tattoos (in a nonprofessional setting). I thought she was adorable. I never questioned her skills; it didn't even occur to me. In fact, I advised her to move on from work comp.

Tattoos are much more mainstream these days. The important thing, in my opinion only, is to move and grow with the times, no matter what your age. We're certainly not the coffee girl anymore, and I've always felt that way from day one! Judging is ugly — unless you're a judge, that is!

*Jeanese Johnson
Redondo Beach, Calif*

How long has it taken you to finish school? I have a big problem. I just found out that my court reporting school is shutting down by August 2011. I am currently on 180 jury charge, 180 Q&A, and 200 lit. I don't know what to do, where to go. This fall will be two years that I have been in this program. I like court reporting, but now I am questioning whether it is for me or not. I don't want to waste two years of my life. How long does it usually take to finish? I know I still have a ways to go, so I was just wondering how long it has taken any of y'all. I live in Texas. I don't know if

any of the online programs would be good for me or not — I'm just so confused and would love some great advice! Please help me! Thanks!


*Amber Hogue
Kilgore, Texas*

After 1028 views and 10 responses, the current "Best Answer" with 17 votes:

Hi, there. I've been reporting about 2-1/2 years, and I'm more than twice your age. I just mention that because I had dreamed of doing this when I was 20, got sidetracked, and then came back to it around 20 years later. I have never been happier in my career and kind of wish I had done it at your age. I love the flexibility of going out on a job, back home to edit, and although I spend many a late night working, the pay is very good and I'm home most of the time. I didn't think I would like editing or scoping my transcripts, but it turns out I love that, too. So you just have to think through the reality of the logistics of this job, of which I've named a few, and decide if those things sound appealing. Unfortunately, sometimes you just don't know until you're experiencing it. Try to continue to ask questions and get as many perspectives as possible. See if anyone will take you out with them to observe on the job and even write. The reporter will always need to get permission from the attorneys before you just show up, though. And if you go to court to write, you'll need to get permission ahead of time from the judge. Otherwise, you can sit in the public seating and just observe for court.

Regarding your skill level, you have progressed beautifully and may be closer than you think. If your school is closing in 2011, you have an excellent shot at finishing before that time. Even though it took me four years to complete the program, it only took me three months to pass all of my 180, 200, and 225s. It was sort of my miracle quarter. Our school closed, too — immediately after I graduated. Whew! Talk about a close one!

Only you can make the decision. But you're so close, and with more hard work and then maybe even a little harder than that, you could be out very soon! Not to give you false hope, but you've come so far so quickly, I think you'll make it just fine, and sooner than you think! Good luck and feel free to contact me if you have any specific questions for a fairly new-but-getting-



more-experience-by-the-minute reporter:
Cassandra M. Beiling
Brentwood, Tenn

Todd Olivas is a court reporter and a blogger, who started the Readback org site, which permits viewers to rate the answers to each question. To ask a question, visit www.readback.org