

# Rules of the Interview

It is vital that children be provided with verbal instructions regarding the interview process. There are several rules that must be explained to the child which the child must have an opportunity to practice and apply. The rules should always be presented age-appropriately to the child (Saywitz, 1996):

- There will be some questions that you do not know the answers to. That's okay. If you don't know the answer, say "I don't know the answer."
- We are only going to talk about what REALLY HAPPENED. No pretending or making-up answers.
- If you don't know what something means that I ask, say, "I don't understand" and I will use new words.
- I may ask you something that I already asked you- Sometimes I forget. Don't change your answer because I asked you the same question 2 or 3 times.
- I may say something to you that is wrong. If I say something that you know is wrong, you have my permission to tell me I am wrong.

Adapted from:

Saywitz, K., Snyder, L. & Nathanson, R (1999). Facilitating the communicative competence of the child witness. *Applied Developmental Science*. 3(1), 58-68

Saywitz, K., & Snyder, L. (1996). Narrative elaboration: Test of a new procedure for interviewing children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. Vol. 64, 1347-1357

Saywitz, K., & Moan-Hardie, S. (1994). Reducing the potential for distortion of childhood memories. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 3, 257-293

Saywitz, K., Geiselman, R.E., & Bornstein, G. (1992). Effects of cognitive interviewing and practice on children's recall performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 77(5), 744-756

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**Handout 5-3**