



# Oral History

A GUIDE AND BEST PRACTICES FOR  
YOUR OWN ORAL HISTORY  
PROJECTS

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**Disclaimers:** The County of Huron will not be held liable in cases of user negligence or data breaches while using this guide or the software mentioned within it.

Oral histories are a subjective form of research. They reflect personal memories and interpretations shaped by individual perspectives and contexts. They do not claim objective or universal truth, but they offer meaningful insights into lived experiences.

## Overview

This guide is designed for members of the public with little-to-no experience in interviewing who wish to start an oral history project. It provides step-by-step instructions, ethical guidelines, and practical tips to ensure interviews are respectful, accurate, and preserved for future generations.

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“The real record of history is found in the lives of ordinary people who lived it.”

Texas Historical Commission

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## Quick Steps

1. Before You Begin
  - a. Define project goals and audience
  - b. Choose format (audio/video)
  - c. Identify interviewee(s)
2. Planning
  - a. Research and background
  - b. Draft open-ended questions
  - c. Test equipment
3. Consent & Ethics
  - a. Explain project in plain language
  - b. Provide Participant Info Sheet, Consent Form, and Release Form
  - c. Meet with interviewee beforehand to assess comfort level
4. During the interview
  - a. Quiet, comfortable location
  - b. Start with introductions and easy questions
  - c. Listen actively; ask clarifying questions
5. After Interview
  - a. Thank participant
  - b. Save and back up recordings immediately
  - c. Label files clearly
  - d. Save the original signed consent and release forms in secure location
  - e. Transcribe and review for metadata
  - f. Publish

# Introduction: Understanding Oral History

## What is oral history?

Oral history is a research method that involves the recording, preservation, and interpretation of historical information, based on people's direct lived experiences<sup>1</sup>. Normally, it involves interviewing people with personal knowledge of past events that occurred during their lifetime, what those events meant, and how it felt to experience them. Oral history recordings are treated as primary source documents, like eyewitness testimony.

Oral history relates to but differs from oral tradition. **Oral tradition** evolved across cultures around the world and can include folklore, myths, songs, and stories that have been verbally passed down through generations.<sup>2</sup> **Oral history** as a modern research approach evolved in the 1940s United States and involves (1) recording, (2) preserving, and (3) making available these life stories.<sup>3</sup>

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“Oral history is necessary for the history of the nonhegemonic classes; they are less necessary (though by no means useless) for the history of the ruling classes who have control over writing.”

Dr. Alessandro Portelli

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## Why is oral history important?

Historical artifacts and documents can't tell us everything about our past. Often, they concentrate on "important" people and big events and tend to miss out on ordinary people talking about everyday events. They also neglect people on the margins of society - such as Indigenous, disabled, minority, immigrant, and unemployed people - whose voices have been hidden from history. For example, the Huron County Museum collection started with a focus on early settlement to the area. Within recent years, there has been a greater focus on collecting histories

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<sup>1</sup> "Oral History - Introduction." [University of Leicester School of History](https://www.le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf), University of Leicester, 2014, [le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf](https://www.le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Texas Historical Commission. (2004). Fundamentals of Oral History: Texas preservation Guidelines. In [Texas Historical Commission](https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/OralHistory.pdf). Texas Historical Commission. <https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/OralHistory.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Vo Dang, Thuy, Krystal Tribbett, Jolene Beiser, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Audra Eagle Yun. [Oral History Toolkit](https://oralhistory.lib.uci.edu). Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries, Accessed: 8 Oct 2025. [oralhistory.lib.uci.edu](https://oralhistory.lib.uci.edu)

that are not represented such as Indigenous communities, 20<sup>th</sup> century immigration, LGBTQ stories, etc.

Oral history is important because it accesses lived experiences and adds layers of meaning to existing historical narratives. It can also fill gaps in historical understanding and challenge or contradict it. Many histories are written with either very little, or **no** personal experiences at all, thereby either stripping the story of its crucial context or creating an illusion of “objective fact.”

### So, is it just an interview?

Interview projects tend to be shorter and more focused on a particular topic the interviewer is studying. Oral histories, while they may be guided by a particular topic, are focused on creating primary source materials to be preserved and published for a wider audience.<sup>4</sup>

### Memory

All memories are a mixture of facts and opinions, and both are important. Memory recall is always active and always dependent on a particular moment in time, such as the interview. Memories are never untainted and change depending on the interview itself.<sup>5</sup>

Because of this, oral history memories are not 100% reliable in objective or measurable terms. Instead, oral history tells us less about events and more about their **meaning**. “What is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings,” writes Alessandro Portelli.

In this context, **objectivity and neutrality do not exist**. For the interviewer, context will always shape what questions someone asks, their follow-up questions, and how they interpret response. For the interviewee, context will always shape how they will answer a question. Both interviewer and interviewee are **cocreators** of the oral history.

### Rapport

This refers to the ease of relationship between interviewer and interviewee. This can be affected by the level of trust between the interviewee and interviewer, how comfortable the interviewee feels, the friendliness of the interviewer, the natural connection between the interviewer and interviewee, and other things. For a

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<sup>4</sup> Vo Dang, Thuy, Krystal Tribbett, Jolene Beiser, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Audra Eagle Yun. [Oral History Toolkit](#). Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries, Accessed: 8 Oct 2025. [oralhistory.lib.uci.edu](#)

<sup>5</sup> Norquay, Naomi. (1999). Identity and Forgetting. In [Oral History Review](#) 26(1): 14

strong interview, building rapport is essential.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, it is important to ensure the interviewee feels safe and comfortable speaking about their experiences and for the interviewer to build their interview skills to become more comfortable with the process. Asking clarification questions and “Do I understand you right?” often helps the interviewee feel their answers are valued<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Raleigh Yow, V. (2015). Interviewing techniques and strategies. In [Recording Oral history: a Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) (pp. 103–136). Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>7</sup> Raleigh Yow, V. (2015). Interviewing techniques and strategies. In [Recording Oral history: a Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) (pp. 103–136). Rowman & Littlefield.

# Steps: Starting an Oral History Project

1. **Set your parameters.** What is your project about? What do you want to learn? Clearly understand the goals, scope, and intended audience of your project. This will guide your questions.

In general, there are 4 main types of oral histories<sup>8</sup>:

- A. Life histories: interviews about someone's background from childhood to adulthood. This is the most common.
- B. Topical histories: focused on specific events, eras, or organizations.  
*For example, the end of Huron County rail travel, CHSS in the 1950s, Huron County roller skating culture in the 1970s.*
- C. Thematic studies: used to gather information on broad patterns and concepts.  
*For example, love, conflict, hope, religion, competition, education, success, art, etc.*
- D. Site/artifact-specific research: can be used to explain items within a museum collection.  
*For example, how to use a threshing machine, what a particular street or factory was like, how to churn butter, etc.*

2. **Conduct background research** beforehand to determine what/if oral histories have already been done on the subject. It will also give a clearer vision of what your interviewee has experienced and what specific contributions your project will make to the historical record.
3. **Practice Reflexivity.** Recognize where your interest in the topic comes from and why you are a good person to conduct this project (often, those two things are directly related). Consider whether you have a level of "insider status" on the topic and, if not, how you can build rapport and ease

**Reflexivity:** Examining our own feelings, reactions, and motives for doing something, and how these influence what we do or think.

with potential interview subjects.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Texas Historical Commission. (2004). Fundamentals of Oral History: Texas preservation Guidelines. In [Texas Historical Commission](https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/OralHistory.pdf). Texas Historical Commission. <https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/OralHistory.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Murphy, A. T. (2020). Listening in, listening out: intersubjectivity and the impact of insider and outsider status in oral history interviews. *Oral History*, 48(1), 35–44. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48568046>

What assumptions and ideas are you already starting from? How might an interview derail some of these assumptions? Assumptions **almost always** influence how and why we choose topics and questions,<sup>10</sup> which then shapes the frames, structures, and definitions we use during the interview.<sup>11</sup> Recognizing this enables us to accept when certain interviewees may have a different experience, and how to respond with curiosity rather than doubt. This process is important to recognize hidden bias, both positive and negative<sup>12</sup>.

**In short: Your own perspective shapes the interview. Be aware of your assumptions and stay curious.**

4. Optional: Create an **Oral History Project Plan**.

Find a sample Oral History Project Plan in **Appendix C**.

5. **Practical Considerations:**

- A. **Storage.** Where will your finished project be stored? (E.g. recordings, transcripts, transcript interpretation, signed consent forms, etc.).
- B. **Equipment and software.** What tools will you use and how will you get them? [More details on equipment and software on Page 10.](#)
- C. **Publication.** What do you plan to do with your project when it is finished? Publish it for your family? For broader use? In a journal article? Donate it to a local organization or museum? Determine before completing the interview that the journal, museum, etc. will be able to or interested in accepting your project.

6. **Choose your interviewee(s).**

Why are they the best person to meet your project goals?

Skip this step if you are doing this process in **reverse**, in which you know who you want to interview - such as a friend or relative - **before** knowing what you want to interview them about.

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<sup>10</sup> "Oral History - Introduction." [University of Leicester School of History](https://www.le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf), University of Leicester, 2014, [le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf](https://www.le.ac.uk/-/media/uol/docs/academic-departments/history/besh/guides/oh-intro.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Sheftel, A. (2018). Talking and not talking about violence: Challenges in interviewing survivors of atrocity as whole people. *The Oral History Review*, 45(2), 288–303. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy057>

<sup>12</sup> Wong, A. (2009). Conversations for the Real World: Shared Authority, self-reflexivity, and process in the oral history interview. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 43(1), 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.43.1.239>

**7. Create a Participant Information Form.**

Find a sample Participant Information Form in **Appendix A.**

Explain what your project is, where and how the information will be stored and used, how to contact you, the process the interview will take, potential benefits and risks of taking part, how it will be recorded, and their rights as a participant (E.g. right to withdraw). There should be no deception.

**8. Create a Consent and Release Form. Essential!!**

Find sample Consent and Release Forms in **Appendix B.**

**9. Prepare and conduct the interview.** [Detailed information on Page 16.](#)

**10. Transcribe and preserve** the oral history. An oral history is only as good as its ability to be seen and used! [Detailed information on Page 23.](#)

# Choosing the Right Tools

Before recording an oral history, choose which technology to use.<sup>13</sup>

## Recording Type

First, choose which type of recording you wish to do:

1. Video. Requires video recording equipment (video camera, mobile camera, etc.)
2. Audio only. Requires audio recording equipment (tape recorder, mobile recording app, etc.)
3. Manual only (either typing or with notepad/paper). **Not recommended.** Prone to being unreliable because direct recording is impossible and “transcript” is highly dependent on the interviewer's interpretation. It is also more difficult to focus fully on the interviewee and their meaning when trying to write the words as fast as possible.

## Recording Technology

The type of tools needed will depend on both the type of recording you wish to keep and the interview format (remote vs. in-person). In all cases, choose the device or devices that will work best for the interviewer, interviewee, and intended recording environment. Recording on multiple devices will ensure a backup copy of the interview.

## In-person Interviews

Common recording devices for in-person interviews include:

- Mobile devices (cell phones, tablets, laptops)
- Digital Cameras
- Audio recorders (often better quality than cell phones, look for dual microphone)

## Virtual Interviews

Common platforms for virtual interviews that allow recording include:

- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Skype
- Google Meet

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<sup>13</sup> Much of the information in this section is borrowed from UC Irvine Libraries – Oral History Toolkit: Vo Dang, Thuy, Krystal Tribbett, Jolene Beiser, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Audra Eagle Yun. [Oral History Toolkit](#). Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries, Accessed: 8 Oct 2025. [oralhistory.lib.uci.edu](http://oralhistory.lib.uci.edu)

**Note:** free versions of these platforms often have limited options (E.g. 30min video call limit). Double-check your settings to make sure you can do everything you need the platform for.

## Transcription

**Remember!** No transcription tools are a substitute for professional judgment. All require proofreading and editing to ensure correctness and add relevant tones, emotions, gestures, movements, etc. beyond the interviewee's verbal articulation).

### Three Options:

1. Manual transcription. For manual transcription, anticipate 4-6 hours of transcribing per 1 hour of interview. Length of time varies on typing speed, audio quality, number of speakers, accents and jargon, etc.
2. Hire a professional transcription service. Expensive!
3. Automated and AI tools. Cheap (or free!) but require significant proofreading and editing to ensure accuracy, separation of speakers, emotions/gestures, etc.). This is a good **middle ground** between both expensive professional transcription and time-consuming manual transcription. **Ensure your interviewee has consented to this beforehand!**

### Transcription Tips:

- Include the following at the top of your transcription document: Name of project, Interviewee name, Interviewer name, Date of interview, Place of interview, Length of interview, Transcriber name, Transcription date
- Try to include time markers every 3-5min. This makes it easier to return to later.

### Free Automated Tool Options:

1. **MS Word** Transcription tool (Tested in making this guide.)

✓ Recommended

- a. You must already have MS Word already installed.
- b. To generate a transcription from a pre-existing audio file, click the small downward arrow below the blue microphone icon, then click **Transcribe**. It will present you the option to either **Upload** an existing audio file or **Record** a new file. There is a 300-minute monthly limit.
- c. Tips!
  - i. Insert the transcribed text with speakers automatically separated into Speaker 1 and Speaker 2. You can then use the **Find & Replace** feature (Ctrl + H) to automatically change them all to the names you want. To do this, type "Speaker 1" into the "Find what" box. In the "Replace with" box, type

whatever you want them to be named (E.g. "Interviewer"). You can then either replace all instances at once or individually.

- ii. The entire transcription will be hyperlinked to the audio file by default. Remove this by selecting all the text (**Ctrl + A**) and then **Ctrl + Shift + F9**.
- d. Of the tools tested in making this guide, this one worked the best. It picked up most of the words, added timestamps, and was able to distinguish different speakers. It does require a OneDrive account.

2. **GoogleDocs** Text-to-Speech tool (Tested in making this guide.)

✘ Not Recommended

- a. You must have a Google account and a microphone (most laptops and mobile phones have built-in microphones).
- b. To use, open Google Docs. In the task bar at the top, go to **Tools > Voice typing > Click to speak**. You can transcribe the entire audio at once and edit later or stop/start the audio as you edit the transcription.
- c. To edit, you will need to manually separate speakers, proofread for accuracy, and format how you want it to be displayed.
- d. **Not recommended**. Of the tools tested in making this guide, the one had significant issues keeping up with the recording, missing entire sections while trying to process the next section in real-time. It also requires a strong/steady internet connection.

3. **Canva** Transcribe Audio feature (Tested in making this guide.)

✘ Not Recommended

- a. You must have a Canva account. Free version of Canva allows **one** free transcription of up to 4.5MB of audio.
- b. To use, go to Apps and search for **Transcribe Audio**. Click **Use in new design > Doc > Choose file**. Select the audio file you want to transcribe and click "Transcribe your audio." Transcription should automatically appear on the document.
- c. Remember to check the **privacy settings** to ensure it adheres to what is included in your Participant Information Sheet and Consent/Release Forms.
- d. **Not recommended**. 4.5MB is smaller than most interviews so you will likely need to compress the audio file. Not all browsers support Canva and some administratively controlled user settings block certain extensions (was very difficult to get this to work on a County computer).

4. **Otter.ai** (Not tested in making this guide.)

- a. The free plan is limited to 300 monthly transcription minutes and a 30-minute conversation limit. It may require multiple 30-minute segments to be manually combined afterward.

## Editing

**Use edits sparingly!** Editing oral histories inherently carries the risk of damaging historical authenticity and/or misrepresenting the narrator's voice!

Depending on what you are using the oral history for, you may want to edit it for conciseness, clarity, "cleanliness", and enjoyability for a potential audience. If you have access and already know how to use other (perhaps more professional) tools, awesome! Otherwise, here are some free tools:

1. [Audacity](#) (Tested in making this guide.)
  - a. A free open-source application that both records and edits audio. Available for **Windows, MacOS, and Linux**. The application does **not** exist yet for iOS or Android, so avoid trying to edit the audio straight from your phone.
  - b. The most popular among podcasters, musicians, and others.
    - a. Some cool features:
      - i. Noise suppression (reduces background noise on spoken word audio)
      - ii. "Whisper model" from OpenAI also allows transcription.
2. [CapCut](#) (Not tested in making this guide.)
  - a. Primarily a video editor but also offers audio editing feature. Free version includes essential tools like trimming, splitting, filters, and basic effects. Will include the CapCut watermark under the free version.
  - b. Some cool features:
    - i. Dynamic voice changer (could be useful if your interviewee is worried about confidentiality)
    - ii. Transcript-editing tools
    - iii. Can download additional "noise reduction feature" to remove noise from audio online

**If you have a Huron County Library Card**, the following equipment, software, and services are available to you:

1. At the Library: Every Huron County Library branch has computers available for public use. These computers include MS Word with auto-transcription enabled. If you are unsure how to use auto-transcription, one of the

librarians will be able to support you. You can then edit and format the auto-transcription how you would like.

# Legal and Ethical Considerations

## Consent Requirements

**Consent first:** Always obtain written consent before recording. This should cover both the project and the interviewee. Explain how the interviews will be stored and shared; try to cover all possible future uses of the interview so that you don't need to track them down in the future to consent to a new use. This is **essential** to having copyright of the materials you produce. Without consent and release forms, you cannot collect, use, or disseminate any materials you generate as part of an oral history<sup>14</sup> (unless it's a self-history) and they almost certainly will not be accepted by any institution you intend to work with.

**Right to Withdraw:** Participants can stop the interview or refuse any question at any time – without pressure.

Use the sample Participant Information Form (**Appendix A**) and Consent/Release Forms (**Appendix B**).

## Privacy and Confidentiality

Offer options for anonymity if requested. Examples include:

- Using a pseudonym in transcripts and publications
- Redacting personal details such as addresses or names of family members
- Limiting access to original files and sharing only anonymized versions
- Referring to locations in general terms (e.g. “narrator’s home” instead of a street address)
- Applying voice alteration filters to audio/video recordings (ensure you have capacity for this before offering it)

Securely store consent forms and recordings.

## Copyright and Usage

Clarify who owns the interview recording. Typically, after the release form is signed, this is the interviewer (E.g. you).

Please ensure the interviewee has checked all appropriate boxes (**Appendix B**) to ensure the information can also be used for all stated purposes. This way, if the

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<sup>14</sup> Chenier, E. (2016). Oral history's afterlife. *The Oral History Review*, 43(1), 304–312. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohw025>

interview becomes useful for another project in the future, you can avoid having to track the interviewee down for additional consent.

## Ethics

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect traditions, language preferences, and accessibility needs.

**No Deception:** Be transparent about the purpose, risks, and use of the interview. Participants have a right to know how their material will be used.

**Neutrality:** Avoid imposing your own views; let the interviewee's story lead.

# Planning Your Interview

## Preparatory Meeting

It is recommended to meet with your interviewee beforehand, either in person or over the phone, to introduce yourself and explain the reason(s) for requesting an oral history interview with them. This will help them become comfortable with you and give you an idea of what an interview with them may be like. You can also ask if they would like someone (friend or family member) to be with them during the interview.

## Interview Questions/Schedule

Find sample interview questions in **Appendix E**.

Draft a full interview schedule with questions beforehand. This includes both primary questions and sub-questions. When drafting questions, it is helpful to remember that your participant(s), just like anyone else, are more likely to remember:

- An exceptional or unique event
- An event that created strong emotions at the time, rather than little/no reaction
- If following events make the initial even appear “instrumental”, or perceived as a turning point
- If they have a “consolidated” memory, where thinking and talking about an experience help strong encoding
- How they felt rather than precise details and dates
- If they have a key reference point from which to work things out or “jog” their memory (E.g. reminding someone of their age during a particular year may help them remember that year or seeing a particular tool may remind them of their work involving that tool). This is why background research is so important!

## Interview Procedure

1. Select a date, time, and place convenient for both the interviewer and interviewee. The place should ideally be in a quiet location without background noises or distractions.
2. Before leaving, make sure you bring everything:
  - Recording Device
  - Participant Information Form
  - Consent and Release Forms (2 copies)
  - Interview schedule and questions

- Notepad and Pen
  - Water and snacks
  - Tissues (memories are often sensitive)
  - Potential artifacts to “jog” the person’s memory
3. Arrive early to get equipment set up and make sure everything is ready.
  4. Before the interview starts, take some time to chat with the interviewee. It is important that the interviewee feels calm and informed. Discuss:
    - a. The general interview topic
    - b. How long the interview will last
    - c. The consent and release forms. You should go over all the information listed on the forms in detail.
    - d. Any questions or concerns they have
  5. Have the participant sign the consent form **but not the release form** before starting the interview. If conducting the interview **remotely**, consider using Docusign, Adobe, printing/signing and taking photos of the form, or posted mail.
  6. Inform the participant before you start recording.
  7. At the start of the recording, include a lead-in with contextual information (for which you have consent), such as:
    - a. Names (**or pseudonyms, if using**) of interviewee and interviewer
    - b. Full date (**day, month, year**) of the recording
    - c. Location of the interview (**not personal addresses – you can say “narrator’s home”**)
    - d. Subject of the recording

**Find sample introductions in [Appendix D](#).**

8. Follow your interview schedule as **guide** – not a mandate.
9. Remember that any names other than the interviewee’s will need to be redacted, unless they’ve given consent!
10. Settings can be unpredictable, so be prepared for the interview to be cut short, interrupted, or possibly run long, if both parties agree.
11. Before turning off the recorder, ask if there is anything you haven’t asked that they think is important.

12. After the recording has stopped, have the interviewee sign the release form. Allow them to include any “exceptions” (E.g. certain parts of the interview they don’t want to be released).

**But don’t forget! You will not be able to use or keep your interview without this release form!**












13. Discuss any further questions that may have arisen during the interview, as well as any follow-up (E.g. further interviews, publication of results, receiving a copy of results, etc.).









**Remember that your interviewee is a complex person *outside of* your interview topic. Avoid inadvertently framing the interview topic as if it is the sole deciding factor in their lives, even if it is significant.<sup>15</sup>**





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<sup>15</sup> Sheftel, A. (2024). Kaddish for unasked questions: On interviewing my father. *Holocaust Studies*, 30(4), 650–662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2024.2388357>

## Oral History Interviewing Tips and Tricks

DO	DON'T
<p> <b>Give your interviewee a general idea of the topics beforehand but not exact questions.</b></p>	<p> <b>Have your interviewee memorize or read from a script.</b></p>
<p><b>Explanation:</b> You want their responses to be natural and organic. Scripts and preprepared answers might make them feel more confident but removes the essential organic nature of oral history and memory retrieval.</p>	
<p> <b>Ask open-ended questions.</b> E.g. "Tell me about your school."</p>	<p> <b>Ask closed-ended questions or specific dates.</b> E.g. "You went to Exeter Public School, right?"</p>
<p><b>Explanation:</b> Your questions should elicit <b>as much information</b> as possible. Closed-ended questions presuppose a limited number of answers (E.g. What if they attended both Exeter Public school <b>and</b> another school? What if they only went for a few years but then dropped out? Let them tell their own story rather than confirm/deny your pre-existing story.)</p>	
<p> <b>Keep opening questions easy and simple.</b></p>	<p> <b>Throw difficult or confusing questions at an uncomfortable interviewee.</b></p>
<p><b>Explanation:</b> Simple opening questions help interviewees get comfortable with the interview and recording equipment, enabling them to handle more difficult questions as the interview rolls on. Difficult questions at the beginning can make an interviewee uncomfortable and hurt rapport for the rest of the interview.</p>	
<p> <b>Have "optional" sub-questions ready under each "primary" question.</b></p> <p> <b>Allow the interviewee to divert the conversation (if needed) to share what is important to them.</b></p>	<p> <b>Rigidly stick to set questions.</b></p>
<p><b>Explanation:</b> Interview questions are to <b>guide</b> (not dictate) the interview. Additional "optional" questions for each primary question can help if the interviewee is more shy or anxious to speak spontaneously, but they are a guide only. Remember the point of the interview is to find how the different topics hold meaning <b>in the interviewee's</b> eyes, so they should be free to direct the conversation.</p>	
<p> <b>Keep questions clear with a single request.</b> E.g. "Tell me about your school." If the response is short like "It was ok", ask</p>	<p> <b>Ask compound questions.</b> E.g. "What was school like? Was it strict? Were you separated into boys and girls? Was there any bullying? How were</p>

DO	DON'T
<p>follow-up questions like “How strict was it?” or “How were the years divided?” or “What were classes like?” or “How was bullying dealt with?”</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> While to the interviewer, immediate follow-up questions can <b>feel</b> like clarification of the initial question, they can confuse the interviewee as they try to remember and respond to all the specific topics you mention rather than focusing on what is important to them. If the follow-up questions are also important, wait for a response to one before guiding toward the next question.</p>	<p>classes?”</p>
<p> <b>Practice recording yourself beforehand to test equipment and become comfortable.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> Even if you are a technology wizard, it might feel unnatural to be recorded, or the microphone might work better from a certain distance but you don't know without trying, or your recording device might not be compatible with your computer, or the camera angle might create a glare you don't notice until after, or you might be anxious in the moment and forget your inner technological genius, etc. Practice alone beforehand.</p>	<p> <b>Assume you can figure it out right before the interview.</b></p>
<p> <b>Respect the interviewee's right to reject certain questions or end the interview altogether. You can ask for a reason why, but not as a form of pressure to answer the original question.</b></p> <p>E.g. “We won't talk about that, but can you explain why you don't want to?” If they say no, <b>move on</b> to the next topic/question.</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> If someone doesn't want to answer a question, they are withdrawing their consent to that question. <b>Pressuring them further is an ethics violation.</b> While asking for clarification is okay, pressuring them is not.</p>	<p> <b>Pressure the interviewee into answering a question they don't want to answer or are uncomfortable with.</b></p> <p>E.g. “But this could help future generations understand the difficulties of women going to school in the 50s. Why wouldn't you want to share that?”</p>
<p> <b>Consider mentioning the different options for archiving the interview before starting.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> While it's fine to plant the idea of archiving at the beginning of the interview, to get their mind thinking about it, don't have them sign the release donation forms until afterward. People generally like to wait until they know what is said during the interview.</p>	<p> <b>Have them sign a release or donation form at the very beginning of the interview.</b></p>
<p> <b>Have the interviewee sign the Consent Form before the start of the interview the Release Form at the</b></p>	<p> <b>Have the interviewee sign both at the same time, either before or after.</b></p>

DO	DON'T
<p><b>end.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The Consent form is essential beforehand because it's authorizing you to do the interview but having them also sign the Release Form beforehand is like asking someone to hand over a blank check: it gives you ownership over words they haven't even said yet.</p>	
<p> <b>Ask for clarification on certain topics, occasionally summarize.</b></p> <p>E.g. "So you [...] Do I understand you right?"</p>	<p><b>Suddenly move on from topics without acknowledging what they said.</b></p> <p><b>Repeat everything they said.</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> It's important for the interviewee to feel <b>heard</b>. Occasionally summarizing their points and asking for confirmation, regularly asking for clarification, allowing the interview to move down a different path, and pursuing topics they seem to care a lot about, are all ways to show an interviewee that you are listening.</p>
<p> <b>If something seems inaccurate, ask questions about the alternative.</b></p> <p>E.g. "Are you saying the Red Cross provided no help at all for the flood victims? Some people have said they were there the whole time; why would they say that?"</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> The interview is about <b>their</b> story, and the interviewee is <b>always</b> the authority in their own story. The interviewer should always act neutral, even if they are not. If you are certain that it was not how the interviewee described, put the onus of disagreement on a third party rather than yourself (E.g. "some people have said it was the other way; why do you think they would say that?" Alternatively, if you <b>must</b> challenge their account, wait until the end of the interview. Then, if the challenge breaks the rapport, at least the interview is practically over.</p>	<p><b>Directly challenge inaccurate accounts.</b></p> <p>E.g. "I'm pretty sure the Red Cross was actually there the whole time."</p>
<p> <b>Ask for concrete examples and illustrations</b></p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> After making a broad statement (E.g. "my mother never really had time to teach me things"), ask for a concrete illustration or example (E.g. "Could you give me an example of that?"). This adds depth and illustration to the material you are collecting and requires the interviewee to be specific and qualify sweeping statements.</p>	<p><b>Let sweeping statements go unnoticed.</b></p>
<p> <b>Ask about sensitive topics broadly.</b></p> <p>E.g. "Did you ever hear of any instances of racial discrimination in this neighbourhood?"</p> <p><b>Explanation:</b> This allows the interviewee to discuss sensitive issues from a distance and only</p>	<p><b>Directly ask about sensitive topics.</b></p> <p>E.g. "Did you ever experience racial discrimination?"</p>

DO	DON'T
personalizing it if they choose.	
<p data-bbox="118 387 193 461"></p> <p data-bbox="221 367 778 477"><b>Arrive prepared with potential key dates, names, places, or incidents to trigger interviewee's memory.</b></p> <p data-bbox="108 504 1469 649"><b>Explanation:</b> These are concrete details that are often difficult to recall exactly but can serve as excellent triggers for people's memory. This is where background research is especially important. Outside research can provide many historical facts, but people are better at remembering how they felt and experienced something.</p>	<p data-bbox="810 398 853 454"></p> <p data-bbox="885 385 1398 456"><b>Expect the interviewee to automatically recall all key facts.</b></p>
<p data-bbox="118 701 193 775"></p> <p data-bbox="221 678 722 786"><b>Process the oral history for preservation as soon as possible after it finishes.</b></p> <p data-bbox="108 813 1457 996"><b>Explanation:</b> A recorded interview left unlabelled on some storage drive, or in your phone's list of recordings, or on a notepad left randomly in a desk drawer is not preserved. Time passes and information is lost. This is why it's important to do the boring work of processing the interviews as <b>quickly as possible</b>. If it is valuable enough to collect, it is valuable enough to preserve.</p>	<p data-bbox="810 712 853 768"></p> <p data-bbox="885 678 1469 786"><b>Leave the unprocessed recording on your phone/ laptop/ camera/ notepad until you have a use for it.</b></p>

## After the Interview

1. Thank the interviewee for their time and interest in the project. Explain to them what will happen to the final product and where they may access it if interested.
2. Ensure all materials and files are stored safely and in accordance with what was laid out in both the Participant Information Sheet and Consent/Release Forms, and that the original signed Consent/Release forms are stored in the correct place.
3. Write an abstract. This is a 100–150-word guide to the contents of the recording.
4. Document all necessary archival information (if needed), such as: preparation and methods, project context and goals, and any technical or descriptive metadata (names, places, businesses, organizations, keywords, etc.)
5. Transcribe the interview.
6. Back up all your files.
7. Publish your oral history<sup>16</sup> (E.g. YouTube, Vimeo, your local Library or Museum, independently publish the transcripts and distribute to your family, etc.)
  - a. Institutionally affiliated projects will naturally grant more options for hosting and access platforms. Discuss options for preservation and access with the institution **beforehand**. In this case, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between you and the institution can help clarify roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes.
  - b. For working with or storing the oral history at an institution, consider long-term stewardship:
    - i. Does the institution have capacity to accept the interview materials and is capable of long-term preservation of the objects?
    - ii. Do you have the correct metadata and are the documents in the correct formats? (E.g..mp3, .mp4., .wav.)
    - iii. What are the institution's processes for when an interviewee changes their mind and wants their oral history taken down? Have they already signed away all rights regarding this?

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<sup>16</sup> Much of this information is borrowed from UC Irvine Libraries – Oral History Toolkit: Vo Dang, Thuy, Krystal Tribbett, Jolene Beiser, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Audra Eagle Yun. [Oral History Toolkit](#). Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries, Accessed: 8 Oct 2025. [oralhistory.lib.uci.edu](http://oralhistory.lib.uci.edu)

- iv. Is the interviewee clear that their oral history can be shared or republished by the institution? Are they comfortable with the institution having the power to make these decisions?

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Sample Participant Information Sheet

This is a sample form that must be amended according to your oral history project. Depending on what you will do with your project, some/many questions may be unnecessary, and you may wish to add others. These questions are a guide only.

### **Project Name:**

### **Invitation:**

You are being invited to take part in this oral history project. You have been chosen because \_\_\_\_\_ and you have unique insight into \_\_\_\_\_. Before taking part, it is important to ensure that you fully understand why the research is being conducted and what is involved. Please take the time to read through the following information and ask any questions you may have. Take time to decide if you would like to take part in this study.

1. What is the purpose of the research?

Discuss the overall project, why you are collecting oral histories, who you are collecting them from, and what you will use it for.

2. What is oral history?

Describe what oral history is, why it is important, and how they add value to the historical record, acknowledging its subjectivity.

Example: Oral history is a method of gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events. It relies on the subjective memories of people with direct experience of the phenomena under study. Its value lies in its ability to both place people's experiences within a larger historical and social context, as well as contextual social and historical events through how people lived them.

3. Where and when will the interview take place?

Can be either specific or general, to give the participant an idea.

Example: The interview will take place whenever it is most convenient for both you and the interviewer, either online or offline. It will be 60-120 minutes, and a follow-up interview may be requested. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed later.

4. What will I have to do?

Example: You will be interviewed and asked a couple of questions that connect back to your experiences \_\_\_\_\_ . The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

5. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Example:

By sharing your memories, your experiences will be recorded as part of the historical record, which can help to shape historical knowledge.

It also gives you an opportunity to share memories and experiences that may be important to you.

6. What are the possible disadvantages and/or risks of taking part?

Discuss risks of bringing up potentially painful memories and list external organizations the interviewee can contact for support.

Example:

The interview raises no risk of physical or psychological harm and involves no deception. However, sharing one's memories can be an emotional experience, especially if it touches on a difficult moment from the past. It is possible you may find the memories or topics brought up during the interview to be upsetting or stressful. If this is the case, please let me know if you would like to take a break, ask for clarification, stop the recording, or if you would prefer not to answer a question. Additionally, if after completing the interview, you wish to speak to somebody about an uncovered memory or topic, you can reach out to \_\_\_\_\_ .

7. Do I have to take part?

Give ways the interviewee can withdraw if they want.

Example: This interview is entirely voluntary. Before we begin the interview, we will review this letter to ensure you are comfortable with participation, answering any questions you may have. You will then be asked to sign the official Consent and Release Forms.

If you wish to withdraw from the project, you may do so immediately after reading this information, at any point during the interview (E.g. Interrupt the question and simply state you wish to withdraw), or up to \_\_\_\_\_ after the interview is completed.

8. What will happen if I do not want to continue with the project?

Discuss right to withdraw. Could be combined with #6.

Example: If you withdraw from the project, you will cease to be contacted for further research, for example, follow-up oral history interviews. If you decide to withdraw, you will be asked to notify us to either i) maintain the information and data you have already shared in the study, or ii) remove and destroy your data from all project files.

9. How will my personal data be kept securely?

Discuss the security around use of the interviewee's personal data.

Example: All personal data you share in this interview will be treated as confidential and, to this end, will be stored securely in a password-encrypted environment for a minimum of ten years after the completion of the research project. Hard copies of data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and disposed of securely when no longer required. If desired, you may choose a pseudonym to be used throughout the interview and resulting research documents.

10. What will happen to the results of the project?

Beyond just the interview, will it be studied or analysed? Made available for future researchers? Publication?

Example:

Based on the consent you have given, information you share, including the AV materials (recording, transcript, photos provided, etc.) will contribute to a growing body of primary source material on this history. It may be made publicly available for future research and use by

\_\_\_\_\_.

Results may be distributed in academic journals, and possibly book-length treatments. Research outputs may be publicised on web-based/social media platforms and in the mass media, as well as in conference and public talks and exhibitions.

11. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This is more for formal or professional projects requiring an ethical review board and a list of data protection laws it adheres to.

Example: This project has been reviewed by

\_\_\_\_\_. It adheres to  
\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

12. Will I receive payment for taking part?

There are often ethical risks surrounding payment (E.g. Extortion).

Example: No payments or incentives will be provided for participation in the research.

13. What happens after the interview?

Explain how the interview process will close.

Example: When the interview is finished, you will have another opportunity to ask questions about your participation. You may also be invited to engage in another interview later, time, and venue mutually convenient to both of us.

14. Further information and contact details:

Include the name and contact details of both the interviewer and an independent person (E.g. Interviewer's supervisor).

Example: If you would like to reach out to the interviewer at any time, please feel free to contact them at any time at \_\_\_\_\_.  
If you are unhappy with the project or wish to share feedback, please contact \_\_\_\_\_.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering your participation in the \_\_\_\_\_ Project.**

## Appendix B: Sample Consent and Release Form

### Appendix B1: For General Public Use

Please read the following statement and, if you choose to participate in \_\_\_\_\_ Project, sign your name in the space provided below. Please not you do not waive any legal rights by signing this document.

I have read the Letter of Information and this Consent Form. I have had the nature of the study explained too me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

#### Interview Participant:

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Please check here if you agree to have your interview recording, transcript, and other associated materials deposited in a public repository for the use of future researchers. **You may also be asked to sign a separate museum waiver and consent form.**

\_\_\_\_ Please check here if you would like to use a pseudonym for all aspects of this research.

In the event a long-term study on \_\_\_\_\_ history is conducted in the future, I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me with information about the Project.

Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

Please list any restrictions or special considerations you would like to include regarding information you provide:

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## Appendix B2: For Formal Use

### Oral History Consent Form

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your agreement with the statements below:**

<b>For the Interviewee:</b>		YES	NO
1	I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and have been provided with a copy to keep.		
2	I have had the opportunity to ask the interviewer questions about this project.		
3	I understand I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time during the interview without giving a reason, and to withdraw my data from the project up until <u>(ADD TIME PERIOD)</u> after the interview.		
4	I understand that the interviews will be recorded to aid transcription and accuracy.		
5	I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about how this research is being conducted, I can contact the independent person named in the Participant Information Sheet.		
6	I consent to my real name being used in any public release.		
	If not my real name, I consent to the following pseudonym being used in any public release: _____		

	<b>For both Interviewer and Interviewee</b>	Interviewee		Interviewer	
		YES	NO	YES	NO
7	I understand that the information provided in the interview will be stored at _____.				
8	I understand that the interview and/or its transcripts and/or photos linked to the interview may be made available for public use after _____.				
9	I waive all claims of copyright to ensure the widest possible access for research and publication.				

#### Interviewer

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interviewee

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

## Oral History Interview Release Form

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Project: \_\_\_\_\_

I (print) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to the recording and preservation of an interview of myself by [name of interviewer or name of organization conducting the interview]. I agree that this interview may be (please initial each category):

\_\_\_\_\_ Preserved in an electronic format

\_\_\_\_\_ Transcribed manually

\_\_\_\_\_ Transcribed and/or summarized using AI tools.

\_\_\_\_\_ Edited

\_\_\_\_\_ Printed

\_\_\_\_\_ Published, on the Internet or otherwise (EXCLUDING social media)

\_\_\_\_\_ Published on social media

\_\_\_\_\_ Used in future exhibitions, printed publications, workshops, newspapers, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Transferred to an archive for preservation and access by the [interviewer], the [parent organization], or its agents and used by other researchers once published.

I waive the right to inspect or approve any of the above use(s) and understand that this interview including, without limitation, photographs, films, or voice recordings, transcriptions, and biographical information of me, generated during the course of this interview, will be kept by the [interviewer and/or parent organization] and transferred to [specify institution] for public use, and will be preserved and protected in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures.

I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time up to [time period] after the interview is completed. You may direct any concerns about this project to [parent organization] at [contact information].

**I hereby release and hold harmless the [interviewer], [parent organization], agents, or anyone acting under its authority or permissions from and against any claims, damages, loss, or liability arising out of, connected with, or resulting from the use of voice recordings, transcripts, photographs, and any other media in which I appear. I do this freely and with full knowledge of the legal consequences of this consent.**

Signed (interviewee):	Date:
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Address:	
Email:	Phone #:
Witness:	Date:

**I hereby give my further consent to the use of my name, and/or details about my life that may directly or indirectly reveal my identity:**

Signed (interviewer):	Date:
Address:	
Email:	Phone #:
Witness:	Date:

Any Restriction(s)/Conditions (e.g. Certain topics, names, or sections may be restricted):

None (**initial**) \_\_\_\_\_ or please specify:

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## Appendix C: Sample Oral History Project Plan

To be adapted as relevant. Taken directly from:

Vo Dang, Thuy, Krystal Tribbett, Jolene Beiser, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Audra Eagle Yun. [Oral History Toolkit](#). Special Collections and Archives, University of California, Irvine Libraries, Accessed: 8 Oct 2025. [oralhistory.lib.uci.edu](http://oralhistory.lib.uci.edu)

### Oral History Project Plan

This form is intended as a guide to help you outline and plan an oral history project. Before commencing your oral history project, it is important to consider such questions as: (1) What is the purpose of the project? (2) Who will you invite to tell their stories? (3) How will you conduct the interview or collect the oral history? (4) How will you protect the rights of narrators and interviewers? While this form is not exhaustive, it is a good starting point. We encourage you to modify it according to your needs and goals.

**1. Names of Project Leads:**

**2. Project Advisor (if applicable):**

**3. Project Title:**

**4. What is the purpose/goal of your project? Is there an overarching question you are trying to answer? Describe it. How will oral history help you to achieve your goals or answer your questions?**

**5. What is the scope of your project? What do you want to accomplish?**

The core of an oral history project is the collection and preservation of the stories collected. This said, it is also important to take into consideration all the intended goals of your project that may include the dissemination of the oral histories collected. What are the intended products of your project? For example, do you plan to collect oral histories and donate them to a library, archive, or organization? Do you plan to collect oral histories and create an exhibit highlighting the stories collected? Do you plan to publish them onto an online platform or in a book?

**6. Whom do you intend to interview and why? How many interviews do you plan to conduct?**

Working with people of varying backgrounds and abilities (i.e. children under eighteen, economically disadvantaged, current or former prisoners, various mental abilities, and more) requires careful consideration and

preparation. Project leads and advisors should make every effort to minimize or avoid unintentional harm.

**7. How will you identify and contact narrators? How will you protect your narrators' privacy and rights?**

Oral histories are personal. It is important to acknowledge that sharing one's oral history and collecting it can be intimate and sensitive in nature.

**8. List several questions you intend to ask. This is a preliminary list. Your final list of questions may look slightly different for each narrator and from your preliminary list.**

**9. Approximately how long will each interview take? Do you plan to have multiple recording sessions with each narrator?**

**10. Who will conduct the interviews? Will interviewers require training?**

**11. How and where will you conduct interviews? Virtually? In person? Will you collect video recordings or audio only recordings? Will you welcome written responses to your questions?** If virtual, what guidance will you offer to narrators for choosing or setting up a comfortable, private, and safe interview setting? If you plan in-person interviews, choose a public or secluded setting that is convenient, safe, comfortable, and private for all parties involved.

**12. Do you plan to create transcripts of the oral histories collected? If so, how?**

**13. How will you use or present the oral histories collected? Who are your intended audiences?**

**14. What are your plans for preserving the oral histories and transcripts collected?** Will you donate them to an archive, library, organization, or group?

**15. What is the expected duration of the project and/or project timeline?** This should include the pre-planning and the delivery of project deliverables. For example, will you need to complete the entire project in 10 weeks? Do you anticipate collecting all the oral histories in one week and then taking an additional four weeks to develop an exhibit or author a paper?

**16. Additional considerations?**

## Appendix D: Sample Introductions

To be adapted/shortened as relevant. Taken from:

Texas Historical Commission. (2004). Fundamentals of Oral History: Texas preservation Guidelines. In [Texas Historical Commission](#). Texas Historical Commission.

<https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/OralHistory.pdf>

### General outline:

This is \_\_\_\_\_ . Today is \_\_\_\_\_ .  
I'm interviewing for the \_\_\_\_\_ time (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Dr., Rev., etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_. The interview is taking place in (the)  
(home, office, backyard, another described place) of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ at (address)\_\_\_\_\_. This interview  
is being conducted by (specific group)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_ and is part of the \_\_\_\_\_ project.

### Example 1:

This is Eveline Brooks. It's October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026. I'm interviewing for the first time Geraldine Brooks, my grandmother. The interview is taking place in Grandma Brooks' room at Huronview Retirement Home on 77722 London Rd., Clinton, Ontario. This interview is being conducted by her granddaughter to capture and preserve her life story and memories for our family. We'll be talking about your childhood, your family, and what life was like growing up.

### Example 2:

This is Charles Blanks, a member of the Huron County Historical Society. Today is March 2, 2026. I'm interviewing for the first time Mr. Scotty Jergenson, a longtime resident of the Goderich community in Huron County. This interview is taking place at Mr. Jergenson's office at 175 Suncoast Drive E., in Goderich, Ontario. This interview is being conducted by Huron County County Historical Society and is part of the Communities of Huron County Oral History Project.

## Appendix E: Sample Interview Schedules

### Appendix E1: Basic Family History Interview (E.g. For a family member)

To be adapted/shortened as relevant. Taken from:

UCLA Library | Center for Oral History Research. (2025). [Family history sample outline and questions](https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/pages/family_history). Oralhistory.library.ucla.edu; UCLA Library. Retrieved October 8, 2025, from [https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/pages/family\\_history](https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/pages/family_history)

#### Early Childhood and Family Background

##### 1. Tell me about your family and home life growing up.

- When and where were you born?
- Tell me about your parents or your family background.
- Where was your family originally from?
- What did your parents do for a living? Did you contribute to the family income or help parents in their work in any way?
- What was your parents' religious background? How was religion observed in your home?
- What were your parents' political beliefs? What political organizations were they involved in?
- What other relatives did you have contact with growing up?
- What do you remember about your grandparents?
- What stories did you hear about earlier ancestors whom you never knew?
- How many children were in the family, and where were you in the line-up?
- Describe what your siblings were like. Who were you closest to?
- Describe the house you grew up in. Describe your room.
- What were your family's economic circumstances? Do you remember any times when money was tight? Do you remember having to do without things you wanted or needed?
- What were your duties around the house as a child? What were the other children's duties? How did duties break down by gender?
- When did you learn to cook and who taught you? Were there any special family foods or recipes? Do you still make any traditional family foods?
- What activities did the family do together?
- What did you do on Christmas? Thanksgiving? Birthdays? Other holidays?

##### 2. What do you remember about the community you grew up in?

- Describe the community you grew up in.
- Describe your neighborhood.
- Where did you shop? How far away were these shops and how did you get there?
- What is the largest town or city you remember visiting when you were young? Can you describe your impressions of it?

### 3. What was elementary school like?

- What did you like about school? What was hard about it for you?
- Who were your friends at school?
- Who were your favorite teachers?
- Do you remember teasing or bullying of you or anyone else?

### 4. Tell me about your friends and interests.

- What did you do in your spare time?
- Who were your friends and what did you do when you got together?
- Did you have any hobbies?
- Favorite stories? Favorite games or make-believe? Favorite toys?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?

## Teenage Years

### 1. How did your family life change as you got older?

- How did your relationship with your parents change when you became a teenager?
- If you had conflict with them, what was it over?
- Did you have chores around the house? What were they?

### 2. Tell me about high school.

- What were your favorite subjects? Interests?
- What were your least favorite subjects?
- Did you have any memorable teachers? Describe their teaching style. How did they influence you?
- Was it okay for girls to be smart at your school?
- What were the different groups at your school? Which did you belong to? How do you think you were perceived by others?
- Were you involved in any extracurricular activities? What were they?
- What were your plans when you finished school? Education? Work?
- What did your parents think of your plans? What did your friends think? What did your friends plan to do?
- Did the children in the family have different plans/expectations?

### 3. Tell me about any jobs you had in high school.

- Did you have jobs during your teenage years? Doing what?
- Did you contribute to the family income? If not, how did you spend your money?

### 4. What was your social life like in your teenage years?

- Who were your friends? What did you do together? What individuals did you spend the most time with during this period?
- Was your group of friends single-sex, or did it include both boys and girls?
- At what age did you begin dating? What kinds of activities did you do on dates? Describe your first date.
- What was your parents' advice/rules related to dating/contact with opposite sex? Did they give you a "birds and bees" lecture? Did you get teaching on this in church or school? What was it?

- What were your peer group's norms regarding dating and relationships with a different sex?
- What were your hobbies/interests? What books did you read? What music did you listen to? What sports did you play? What crafts did you participate in?

## Adulthood

### 1. Further Education

### 2. Work and Career

### 3. Tell me about your (first?) marriage.

- When and where did you meet? What drew you to him/her?
- When and how did you decide to move in together and/or marry?
- What was originally the most difficult for you about being married/being in a relationship? What was most satisfying?
- What advice would you give to someone today who was contemplating a committed relationship?

### 4. What was it like when you had children?

- Describe the birth of your children.
- What were they each like when they were young? How have they changed or not changed?
- What were their relationships with each other and with you like when they were young? Now?
- What activities did the family do together?
- What family traditions did you try to establish?
- Does your family have any heirlooms or objects of sentimental value? What is their origin, and how have they been passed down?
- What was most satisfying to you about raising children? What was most difficult?
- What values did you try to raise your children with? How did you go about doing that?
- What forms of discipline did you use and why?

### 5. Ongoing Interests and Hobbies

## Overview and Evaluation

1. What has provided you the greatest satisfaction in life?
2. How would you say the world has changed since you were young?
3. Also, ask about historically noteworthy events the family member lived through:
  - Was your family affected by the Depression?
  - Did you or anyone close to you serve in a war? What do you remember of that experience?
  - Did you support or oppose the war in Vietnam? How did you express your political opinions?

- Did you participate in, or do you have any memories of any of the movements that came out of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, such as the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, or the gay liberation movement?
- If the family member belongs to a group that has traditionally faced discrimination: what were you told, both positive and negative, about your group inside your family? Outside? Did you experience discrimination? Who were your role models?
- If the family member is an immigrant or the child/grandchild of immigrants: what do you know of the country you or they came from? Why did you or they immigrate? How did you or they immigrate? What were some of your or their experiences and difficulties of beginning a life in a new country?
- Do you remember your first contact with such significant inventions as radio, television, or a computer? When did your family first buy these items?

## Appendix E2: Detailed Life History Interview (E.g. For historians, genealogists, archivists)

To be adapted as relevant. Taken directly from:

Southern Oral History Program, & University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (2022). Life history interviews: Sample questions. In *Southern Oral History Program*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<https://sohp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Life-History-Questions.pdf>

DLHI Initial Questions:

**This biographical interview should provide the basic framework for your conversations with each respondent interviewed. In this first interview, respondents narrate the story of their lives, emphasizing the events and experiences which seem most important and meaningful to them. This interview will allow you to discover the respondent's paths of association regarding life events and the setting, timing, sequence, and duration of these events. It will enable you to obtain unanticipated information as well as answers to many of the questions which interest you without imposing your own perspective. It will help you formulate later questions within the respondent's own frame of reference.**

**Although this interview does not follow a rigid schedule of questions, it should not be unstructured. It should proceed in rough chronological order, though respondents may not necessarily arrange their memories with dates as benchmarks. You should guide the course of the conversation by asking for elaboration or clarification, bringing up topics which the respondent has not thought to mention and asking exploratory questions in order to discover the respondent's areas of special knowledge.**

1. Did you know your grandparents? What did they do? Establish any background the respondent might have about the origins of their family.
2. Where was your first home place? Where did your parents come from?
3. When did you come here? Why? With whom? What neighborhood/community did you live in at first?
4. How many people lived in your home? Did you, your parents, and your siblings all live together? Did anyone besides immediate family live with you? Did relatives live nearby? How often did your household interact with relatives or close friends?
5. Before you left home, did your family change residence? Why, where to, and how often? Where did you attend school? For how long? (Ask for siblings.)
6. Did your family attend church / temple? Which church / temple and where? Did you have any jobs or particular responsibilities as a child?
7. When did you leave home? Why?

8. What was your first job? How long did you stay at this work? What other jobs have you held? For how long? When did you retire?
9. View of working life; did you enjoy working?
10. Did you marry? How did you meet your spouse? What jobs did he/she do? Have you married more than once? How often have you moved since you left home? How long did you stay in each place?
11. Are your parents still alive? How long ago did your parents pass away? Who takes/took care of them in their old age?
12. What were things like for your family during the Depression? How did the Depression affect your community?
13. Who made most of the decisions in your family when you were a child – father, mother, grandparent? In your own family?
14. Did both of your parents work outside the home? What did they like to do best when they were not working? Were you closer to your father or mother? Which one are you most like?
15. Did you or anyone else from your family go to fight in WWI or WWII? How did this affect the individual? The family?
16. What is most important to people in this community? How has the community changed within your lifetime as far as its physical appearance is concerned? Its population? The schools? Work available? Wages? Integration of classes, races?

#### DLHI Questions: Family History

**This more detailed list of life history questions focuses on family genealogy, family rituals and relationships, and household routines.**

#### Family Background & Immigration:

1. Were you, your parents, or grandparents born outside of Canada? If yes, where were you / they born and how long did they live there?
2. When and why did your family decide to move to Canada?
3. Do you remember hearing family members describe what life was like in their homeland? What stories did they tell?
4. Do you have old family photographs, letters, antiques, or other memorabilia from your homeland? What special memories or stories are associated with them? How did you acquire them?
5. Do you remember family stories about the frustrations and difficulties of adjusting to life in Canada? Were there family stories about the benefits of life in Canada?
6. If your family members did not speak English before arriving in Canada, when / how did they learn to speak English?
7. What language(s) did your family members speak in their homeland? Do you or your family members still speak that language? When do you use the language of your homeland and when do you use English? What determines which language you use?

8. Do your family's children and / or grandchildren who were born in Canada speak the homeland's language? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel that you or your family members have ever been discriminated against because you were from another country? How did you respond?
10. Do you still have relatives in your family's homeland? Do you stay in contact with them? In what ways?
11. Did you or other family members ever make a return visit to your family's homeland? What was the reason for the visit? How long did you stay? What happened during your visit?

### **Household Organization and Domestic Routine:**

12. What do you remember about your grandparents? Where did they live? Did you see them often? What would you do with them? Did they ever talk to you about their youth? What occupations did they engage in?
13. What other relatives were you close to besides your immediate family: aunts, uncles, cousins? Did these relatives live with you? Relationships with separated relatives?
14. Was there any person in your family older than you who you were especially close to? What impact did this person's aging and death have on you?
15. Who were the members of your household? Any boarders? (Follow up with questions about the role of extended family members within the household.)
16. What were the relationships between parents and children like when you were growing up? Did you want to or not want to repeat these patterns with your own children?
17. What do you remember about your home? What did it look like? What do you remember about your home's layout, rooms, furnishings, artwork and portraits? Did your home have outbuildings? When you were at home, where did you and your family spend the most time? What were the sleeping arrangements in your home? Did you have indoor plumbing? Was your home owned or rented?
18. Who were your neighbors? How far away were your neighbors? Did relatives live nearby? Which relatives?
19. Who took responsibility for various household chores: cleaning, washing, cooking, gardening, sewing, childcare (bathing, bedtime, etc.)?
20. Describe the meals the family took together. Describe your family's diet. What foods were commonly served? What were mealtime seating arrangements? What kind of discussions occurred at mealtimes?
21. Was religious training important in the home?
22. What part did religion play in family life? What was a typical Sunday like? Did your family attend church / temple? Describe Mass / Services.
23. Describe holidays: Christmas, Hanukkah, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, etc. What do you recall about weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other family rituals?

24. Describe your family's most important traditions. Who started these? (Grandparents? Or were they started after their death?) Who enjoyed the ceremonies most?
25. Describe funerals in your family. Were stories told during the funerals? What were some of them? What kinds of things would your family do together? Family entertainments?
26. What family stories, sayings, principles, and codes of conduct stand out in your mind? Did men and women do things together? Separately?
27. Did your family ever move? Why? How often? How did this affect you? What do you remember about the care of babies in your home?
28. What about caring for the elderly? What was done for them? Who did it?
29. Who took care of you when you were ill? Who generally cared for the sick in your family? What procedure was followed? What were the effects of disease on your family?
30. When your parents were both away from home, who cared for the children?
31. If a relative or friend was laid off from work or, if neither parent was working, was there any help from outside sources?

#### Changes in Everyday Technology:

32. What sorts of equipment did your grandmothers and mother use to clean the house? How did they wash and iron clothing? Clean the floors and carpets? Clean the oven? Have new household technologies made house cleaning easier for you? Why / how?
33. How did your grandparents prepare family meals? What foods and appliances/tools did they use? How did your parents prepare meals and what foods and appliances/tools did they use?
34. Did your family sometimes wear homemade clothing? What sorts of clothes were made at home (hats, scarves, socks, shirts, dresses)? Who made and mended the clothing? What tools did they use?
35. What kinds of chores did your grandparents and parents do to maintain the yard and garden? What tools / equipment did they use to water and cut the lawn? To collect leaves? To weed and cultivate vegetables and flowers?
36. Did your family have a telephone? What did it look like and how often was it used? Were children allowed to use it? Did you use it to call long distance?
37. Do you remember your family's first television set? When and how was it purchased? How did television programs compare to radio programs? Did the family watch television together? What shows did you enjoy the most?
38. Describe your family's first automobile. What was its make and model? How much did it cost? Where did you travel in your automobile? How well did the car run? When it needed repair, how were repairs made?
39. What was the longest journey your family ever made? Where did you go and how did you get there (car, train, boat, airplane)? How often did you travel that way?

40. Does your family have a home computer? When / why did you buy it? Who uses it and what do they use it for? How did they learn to use it?

### **Parents and Older Relatives (both sides of the family):**

41. What did your father do? Did he ever talk about his work? Did he like his job? What do you remember doing with him? What did he do around the house?
42. How about your mother? What kind of work did she do? Did she like her work? Did she ever work for wages outside the home? What did she have to say about this work? Why did she go to work? What did your father, other relatives, children, think about her working?
43. How did her working or not working affect the children? Your father? Did she ever earn money at home: taking in boarders, selling produce? Did she do things with other women: quilting, church / temple socials, missionary work? What did you like to do with your mother at home?
44. Were you closer to your mother or father? Which one are you like more?
45. How were decisions made in your family? Who made daily decisions about housekeeping, budget, etc.? How about other decisions like schooling, moving, occupation, approval of marriage? Who made decisions about discipline?
46. Did any other adults besides your parents take part in decision-making? Do you remember any conflicts over decision-making?

### **Childhood and Adolescence:**

47. What are some of your earliest childhood memories?
48. What toys did you play with? Where did you play? Did you have any hobbies?
49. What games did you play with your siblings and with other children? Did you play with girls and boys? Did you go swimming? Where?
50. Did you ever "play like" someone?
51. How important were organized sports to you as a child? What contract did you have with black/white children? Did you have a favorite friend or sibling?
52. Were you expected to act in certain ways around adults? How did you address adults? Wealthy vs poor people? White vs Black people? How were you disciplined? Were you ever disciplined unfairly? By anyone other than your parents?
53. What chores were you responsible for when you were a child? An adolescent? What chores were your siblings responsible for? How were the chores distributed? Do you feel that they were divided fairly?
54. Were you expected to earn money as a child? What jobs did you perform? What did you do with the money you earned?
55. Did your parents want you or your siblings to follow a certain occupation? What did you want to be when you grew up?

56. When did your siblings leave home? Why did they leave? Did you and/or your siblings live at home while you were working? What did you do with your salary?
57. Do you remember a point at which people stopped treating you as a child? Or when you considered yourself grown up?

## **Adult Life:**

### **Courtship**

58. What did boys and girls do together? When did you start dating, courting? Did your parents, preachers, etc. set rules for behavior with girls/boys? Did your siblings have to follow the same rules that you did? If not, why not?

### **Marriage**

59. When did you marry? How did you meet your spouse? What do you remember about your marriage ceremony? Were you married in a church / temple, courthouse? Did you need approval to marry? From whom?

### **Single life**

60. If you were single, when did you leave your parents' home? Who did you live with? How did you divide up the household chores in your home? Who were the people most important to you?

### **Children**

61. Did you have children? How many? Who delivered them and under what circumstances? Were the births of the children planned? Did you and your wife/husband/partner use any form of birth control? Find out the sequences of childbearing and the total number of pregnancies.
62. Who took responsibility for childcare and discipline in your family? What rules/expectations did you have for your sons and daughters? Were they the same? Why / why not? Did you treat your own children the same or differently than your parents treated you?
63. How were decisions made about budgeting, housekeeping, childcare, etc.?

### **Work**

64. Did your spouse work? When? Where? For how long?
65. For women, how did your husband's work affect you and your family?
66. For men, how did your wife's work affect the family? What did you think of her working outside the home? What did others think? What is your opinion of women working outside the home in general?

67. Were you ever separated or divorced? How old were you when this happened and where were you working?
68. Was saving money important to you / your family? Why? Did you / your family have a savings plan? Was saving a realistic goal for your family? Why or why not?

### **Changes in Workplace Technology**

69. When you first started working, what kinds of technology and equipment did you and your co-workers use daily? How did you learn to use this equipment?
70. What new technologies have you encountered during your working life? (For example: When did you first work with a fax machine, word processor, computer, the internet and email?) How did you learn to use this equipment? In what ways have these new technologies made your job easier? More difficult?

### **Property**

71. When did your family first own an automobile? A house? Do you own one today? What property (land or house) do you own today?
72. Did you ever inherit any property from your family? Real estate or personal property?

### **Retirement**

73. What are your plans for retirement? Do you plan to move? What do you plan to do when you retire? Will you have a pension?
74. If you retired, when did you retire? What are you doing? Do you have a pension? Do you see your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc. often?

## DLHI Questions: Community History

**This section of the interview questions explores the interaction of the individual with the community.**

### Education:

1. Did you go to school (elementary, high school, college, graduate school)? Who encouraged / discouraged you? Why?
2. Where did you go to school as a child? How did you get there? Describe the school building.
3. How long did you expect to stay in school when you started? Did you want to stay in school longer than you did? How long did you go to school? Why did you leave?
4. What were the major differences in your education and that of your parents, your children?
5. Did you learn to read and write in school? At home? When? If not, how has this affected your work? Your life?
6. What do you remember about your teachers? Were you ever disciplined by your teachers? Was this fair? Did the teachers play favorites? Why? Who were the favoured students?
7. What did you like about school? What didn't you like?
8. What educational experiences did you have, if any, outside of formal schooling? (Did you ever attend any workers' schools?)
9. Who set the policies and rules for the school? Were there any gangs or groups in your school?
10. Did children of different class backgrounds attend the same schools?
11. Did you attend school with blacks/whites? Did your children attend integrated schools? What is your opinion of this?
12. Do you have any regrets about your education? What were the benefits of your education?

### Religion:

13. Did your family attend church / temple? Where did they go for services? What can you remember about the church / temple (physical appearance)?
14. Who from your community belonged to your church /temple? What did you like about church / temple? What did you dislike? If you changed churches /temples, why?
15. Describe a church /temple service, dress, sermons, Sunday School. When did the services meet? What was the relationship between church / temple leaders to national groups?
16. Who taught Sunday School?
17. What roles did men play in the church / temple? What role did women play? Were groups within the church / temple segregated by sex and age?

18. What were you taught to believe when you were a child? How does that compare to your religious beliefs today? Does prayer play a significant role in your life?
19. Do you have a personal relationship with God? Describe it. What are your favorite religious songs?
20. How important are denominational differences to you?
21. Have you ever been involved in any type of missionary activity?
22. How much time did you normally spend in church / temple? What were your primary activities, variations in these? What were /are your favorite passages from the Bible / Torah / Quran?
23. How did the different members of your family participate in church / temple activities?
24. Do you remember attending revivals as a child? As an adult? Describe. Do you recall the names of any revivalists who came through town? How did you / most people participate in revivals?
25. Do you still belong to / worship in your home church / temple?
26. What do you think of the church's / temple's involvement in fighting / supporting integration? Abortion?
27. What prohibitions did the church / temple enforce? What types of behavior were frowned upon? Expected? How did your church / temple view unions? Organizing activity?
28. When were you baptized and under what circumstances? What members of your family were married in the church / temple? Buried in the church / temple?
29. What are the most important things that you remember about your religious life?

### Politics:

30. Did your parents / you belong to any political organizations? Do you remember attending these meetings with your parents?
31. Who were the most powerful members of your community? Did these people have both political and economic power?
32. Do you remember any particular controversy within your community? How was it settled? What were your particular feelings about it?
33. Who were your town / city council people? Did they change over time?
34. Have you taken part in local politics? How? What were / are the most prominent issues: transportation, utilities, education, taxes?
35. What are your most important political beliefs? Do you think that voting is important? Do you or have you voted? Were you ever prevented from voting?
36. How did you get political news: newspaper, radio, the internet, word of mouth?

37. Do you remember when women got the vote? Did anyone in your family actively support or oppose suffrage for women? Did wives vote like their husbands?
38. What influence did local companies have on politics? Do you remember any political rallies or marches?

### **Neighborhood, Community, Leisure:**

39. Define your neighborhood or community. Describe your neighborhood's geographic boundaries.
40. Who lived / lives in your neighborhood? Did you work with them? Have your neighbors changed much over the years? Why, if so, did you move from one neighborhood to another? Have many of your neighbors left? Where did they go? Were there places especially for single people? Married couples?
41. How many people did you know well in your neighborhood?
42. Who were your parents' closest friends? Did they do the same work as your parents?
43. Where were the gathering places in town? Clubs? Recreational or fun places? Where did men / women / blacks / whites go? Were there places especially for single people? Places for married couples?
44. Were there particular places you liked to spend time as a child and adolescent? As an adult? Was there a bad part of town? Were you afraid to go there? Describe what it looked like.
45. Where did your parents do their shopping? Name some of the stores in your town. What were their functions? Did you go shopping with your parents? What do you remember about these trips?
46. Where did you do your shopping as an adult? Today?
47. What were the main voluntary associations in town (Cubs or Scouts, Kinettes, Red Cross)?
48. Do you remember any civic campaigns in your town?
49. Did the circus, fairs, or carnivals come to your community? Describe.
50. Did you have a favorite local acting group, singer, musician, or dance band? Where and when did you see them perform?
51. Were there individuals who performed special services in the community (washerwomen, prostitutes, midwives, faith healers, palm readers, bootleggers, peddlers)?
52. What medical services were available to your parents? To you as an adult?
53. Were violent crimes ever committed in your community? How did the community respond? Did you ever feel like a second-class citizen at work or in your community?
54. Who were the most important people in the community? Why were they the most important?

## DLHI Questions for Women

### Childhood:

1. What are your earliest childhood memories? Did your parents have “pet” children?
2. When you misbehaved, how would your parents discipline you? Who did the punishing – mother or father? Was there a time when you felt you were punished unfairly? Did punishment for boys and girls differ?
3. Did your parents play games with you? What kind?
4. Did you get along better with your mother or father? Why?
5. What did you learn from your parents that has helped you live your own life?
6. Were there favorite family stories your parents or grandparents told and that you particularly loved to hear? What were they?
7. Describe a typical evening in your parents’ home when you were a child.
8. Did the family eat dinner together? Was there much discussion at the supper table? What did you talk about – work, school? Did the children ever get into arguments at the dinner table?
9. What did mother / father / children do between suppertime and bedtime?
10. What were your favorite toys? Were they store-bought or homemade? Did you play by yourself a lot or usually with siblings or neighborhood kids? Did you make up stories about your dolls and other toys?
11. Did your mother make your clothes? Did you wear hand-me-downs? Once you started working, did you buy your own clothes? Did you have a favorite dress, pair of shoes, hat, etc., of which you were especially fond or proud?
12. Did you or your family order items from the mail order catalogs? What kinds of things – clothes, appliances? What did you and your siblings fight about? Did you tease each other? What about?
13. Did girlfriends come to your house for overnight visits? Did you go to their homes for overnight visits?
14. Did you ever have a friend or relative to whom you wrote letters regularly? What were they about? Did you ever keep a diary? What kinds of things did you write in it?
15. Where did your relatives live? Did you and your family ever go to visit them? How did your relatives’ lifestyles compare to your own?
16. Did you and your family go on vacation? Where did you go or what did you do? What was the longest trip you ever took as a child? Describe it.
17. Who was your best friend? What did you talk about?
18. Did things change much around your house when your mother was pregnant? Were your parents more tense / happy when she was pregnant? Did your mother tell you she was pregnant, or did you just figure it out for yourself? Did your mother give birth at home or in a hospital? Who delivered the baby?
19. Had your mother explained the “facts of life” to you before you started menstruating? What did she tell you? Were you scared when you first started having your periods?

20. Could you confide in your mother? Were there other older women in your family or in the neighborhood with whom you could share your feelings?
21. When you were little, what did you think you'd be when you grew up?
22. Was there a member of your family whom you especially admired? What did you admire about them? Do you remember your favourite schoolteacher? What did you like about him / her?
23. Tell me about some of the good / bad things about growing up in your family.
24. How did your parents get along? Were they publicly affectionate toward each other? Do you remember them having disagreements, fights? Did your mother "talk back" to your father? Was he considered the boss of the house, or did they both have an equal hand in running the household?
25. What were the kinds of things you daydreamed about? Did your fantasies come true? Did people in your neighborhood gossip? What did they gossip about?
26. Were there "good" girls and "bad" girls in your community? Describe them. Did you ever hear of a girl who "got caught" and had to get married because she was pregnant? Did you ever hear about girls being asked to leave school, work, or home because of immoral behavior?
27. Did you suffer from a serious illness or have a bad accident when you were a child or as a young adult? Describe it. How were you treated? Who took care of you?
28. When did you consider yourself to be grown up?

### Marriage:

29. Did you ask your parents' permission to get married? Why or why not? How long had you known your husband before you were married?
30. What were the good qualities about your husband that attracted you to him? What should a good husband do or be? What was the reaction of your friends when they found out that you were getting married, or had gotten married? Did you or your friends worry about being "old maids?"
31. Did your parents give you any advice about being married?
32. Had you / your husband moved away from home before you were married?
33. What kinds of adjustments did you / your husband have to make once you were married? Was the first year or so an especially happy or especially challenging time? Why?
34. Were most of your friends single or married women? What about most of your husband's friends? What did you like / dislike about being married?
35. Were you able to discuss the joys and trials of your marriage with any close friends or relatives? Did you have a close friend with whom you could discuss things that you could not talk about with your husband? How did your marriage change over the years?
36. Did your husband help with the chores around the house? What was his attitude toward housework? Are there core values or beliefs that you and your husband see eye to eye on? Describe them.

37. What did you and your husband most often have fights or disagreements over? Do you remember your first fight? Was there ever a time when you and your husband separated or thought about getting a divorce? Why or why not?
38. Did you and your husband ever disagree about how the children were to be raised, punished? How was the household budget handled? Who made the decisions about major purchases?
39. If you or your husband had an exhausting day at work or at home, was this something you could openly discuss with each other?
40. Did you ever know somebody who was physically or mentally abused by a spouse? How did you find out about the abuse? How did you respond?
41. How would you describe your husband's relationship with your parents? What was your relationship with your in-laws like?
42. How was the "ideal" wife and mother supposed behave? Did you or your friends and family members aspire to that ideal? Why or why not?
43. What was your husband's attitude toward your working / not working?
44. Describe a typical evening in your home. What did you do for entertainment after you were married?
45. Were you a member of any organization or clubs? What kinds? Did you get together with women outside of work / home?
46. Compare your marriage with your parents' marriage.
47. Whose life would you say is easier – a man's or a woman's? Why?

### Motherhood:

48. What kinds of birth control did women use? How was birth control obtained? Did women talk with each other about birth control?
49. Had you always wanted to have children? Why or why not?
50. What was your reaction when you found out you were pregnant? What was your husband's reaction?
51. Were you under a doctor or a midwife's care while you were pregnant? If so, what sort of medical treatment and advice was offered?
52. What did you differently while you were pregnant – special diet, special precautions, limited activities, etc.?
53. Do you remember any "old wives'" tales about pregnancy / menstruation?
54. Did friends and family members offer their own advice about what to do and not do while you were pregnant? How did you respond to this advice?
55. Did your husband help around the house during and after your pregnancy? Did your friends or family members pitch in and help out?
56. While you were pregnant, did you daydream about what your child would look like and how your child would behave? How did you choose names for your children?
57. Were your older children curious and ask questions about your pregnancy? What did you tell them about it? Were women more respected members of the family / community once they became mothers?

58. What kinds of adjustments did you and your husband have to make once you were parents? Did you ever experience postpartum depression (feeling down or sad after giving birth)?
59. Did you trust someone else to take care of your infant or did you feel you had to stay home yourself?
60. How did you learn to take care of your baby – help and advice from family, magazine article and books on childcare?
61. Did you breastfeed your baby? Why or why not?
62. Did your attitude toward pregnancy and childcare change as you had more children? How and why? If you worked outside of the home, who took care of your children while you were away?
63. Did your parents and relatives feel free to discipline your children? How did you feel about this? Compare the way you were reared as a child with the way you reared your own children.
64. What hopes and aspirations did you have for your children?

### **Work:**

65. Did your mother or grandmothers work outside of the home? What did they do? Do you or have you worked outside of the home? Describe that work.
66. Do you think women who work outside of the home are treated with more or less respect than women who do not work outside of the home? Why? Who makes these judgments and do you agree with them?

### **Questions for women who have never worked outside of the home:**

67. What factors influenced your decision to stay at home?
68. Do you have female friends or family members who work outside of the home? How would you compare their lives to your own?
69. Is there a situation in which you would consider working outside of the home?

### **Questions for women who do or have worked outside of the home:**

70. Did you dream of having a career outside of the home? What did you hope to be? Were you able to obtain that dream? Why or why not?
71. Did your family's economic situation influence your decision to work outside of the home? Why or why not?
72. How did you gain the skills / knowledge you needed to perform your work?
73. If you changed careers / jobs during your working life, what factors influenced that change?
74. How did your husband / parents / children feel about your working outside of the home? How did they express these feelings?
75. Did you prefer housework or working outside of the home? Why? Were you ever laid off from your job? Why? What did you do?
76. What roles did women fill in your workplace? How were women treated in your workplace? Were some women treated differently than others? Why?
77. What did you do with the money that you earned from your job?

### **Home and Sense of Place:**

78. How did you feel / react when you are in an unfamiliar place (when you are traveling, moving to a new location, etc.)?
79. How many different homes and locations have you lived in? Did you own or rent these homes? Did you ever share your home with other occupants? Who were they? How did this work out?
80. Which home did you like living in the most? Why? Did you and your husband change it, remodel it in any way? Which home did you like least? Why? Did you and your husband do anything to try to improve the home?
81. Did you ever have to move against your will? Why? How did you come to terms with the move?
82. How do you feel about the home and neighborhood where you currently live? Do you plan to move / retire to another location? Why?

### **Death and Dying:**

83. Was there a death in the family or a death of a friend that was especially hard to take? Why? How did family, friends, and neighbors respond when there was a death in the family?
84. What do you recall about funerals in your family? Where did they take place? Who attended the funeral? Who did not attend and why? Were certain rituals followed? Were special songs or poems included in the ceremony? Were stories told during the funerals? What were some of them?
85. Have you thought about or made plans for the end of your life? What are they?

### **Concluding Questions:**

86. If you could live your life again, are there things that you would do differently? Why? Is there anything that we've left out that you'd like to talk about?

## DLHI: Occupational History Questions for Workers

**The following questions were developed for interviews conducted with Piedmont industrial laborers. Interviewers speaking with other kinds of workers, especially professional workers, will need to change some of the topics and questions to make them more appropriate to their respondents' backgrounds and experiences.**

### Hiring, Training, Performance, Conditions:

1. When did you, your brothers, your sisters, first start working outside of the home? Why? How did you find your first job? Do you remember your first day of work?
2. Who taught you how to perform your job? Was it difficult to learn?
3. Describe what you did. How quickly did you have to work? Did you have a production quota? What were your hours and how were they recorded?
4. What were your feelings about the work that you did? Did you learn to take short cuts in performing this work?
5. Was the work dangerous? Were you afraid of getting hurt? Was anyone injured on the job?
6. What were sanitary conditions on the job (air quality, smells, noise, heat, etc.)? Was there a speed-up or stretch out at your plant? Describe.
7. Were you helped in your work by other employees? Could you help out a fellow worker if you were finished with your job?
8. Were your fellow employees mostly male / female? Black, white, Hispanic?

### Supervision:

9. How closely were you supervised in your work? Did you need supervision? Did supervisors or managers ever try to make you work more quickly? Did they ever try to study how fast you could work?
10. Were there certain rules at the workplace (smoking, eating, talking, breaks, dress, behavior with management)?
11. Did you have to be at work on time? What would happen if you weren't? What holidays could you take? Did you ever take off from work without the supervisor's permission? Why? For how long? Could you get your job back after you returned?
12. Did you and other workers ever decide among yourselves how the work should be done and how much work each person would do? Did everyone abide by the rules? Could you deliberately slow down production? What might happen?
13. Could you and your fellow employees ever make up rules that had to be followed by other workers or supervisors?
14. Did you ever complain to your supervisor about problems related to your work? About other workers? About excessive supervision? How did they respond? How were other workers' grievances settled?

15. Was there any competition among workers? Did management promote competition? How were promotions arranged? Were you ever promoted to higher positions? Were you ever overlooked for promotion? Why? How did you respond?
16. Do you remember any conflicts or jealousies between different groups of workers (skilled vs. unskilled, black vs. white, old vs. new, etc.)? Were some workers treated with more respect than others? Why and by whom?

### **Working Women:**

17. Were female workers treated differently than male workers? Why and in what ways? Did supervisors play favorites among the women? Why?
18. Did families worry about their daughters being exploited by supervisors? Did you ever see this kind of exploitation in your workplace?

### **For female workers:**

19. What did your parents / other workers think about your going to work?
20. Did you plan to keep working after you got married? Did you quit or lose your job or take time off when you had your first baby?
21. How did your husband feel about your working outside of the home? When and why did you go back to work after leaving for any reason?
22. Who helped with the housework when you were working outside of the home? What did you do with your wages?

### **Race / Ethnicity:**

23. Did your workplace employ people of different races / ethnicities?
24. Did people of different races / ethnicities perform the same kinds of work? Why or why not?
25. Did employees of different ethnic / racial groups spend time together when they weren't working (eat lunch together, take work breaks together, play on the same company sports teams, etc.)?
26. Was there ever any tension or disagreement between workers or different races / ethnicities? When did this occur and why? Was there any effort on the part of workers or employers to ease the tension? Why? How?

### **The Company:**

27. What were you paid for your work? How were you paid?
28. What did you think of the company? What benefits did the company offer? Insurance? Medical care? Recreation? Educational activities?
29. Did the company always keep its word? How or how not?

### **Social Activities:**

30. Did any of your co-workers live nearby? What kinds of activities would you do with fellow employees outside of work? Could you socialize with supervisors?

31. Were there company-sponsored recreational activities (sports teams, singing groups, volunteer groups, etc.)? Describe them.
32. Was participation voluntary? Did the company offer prizes or awards for participation? For winning?
33. If there were organized athletic teams in the plant, did you have rivalries with other departments in the plant? With other companies? With other towns?
34. Do you remember any changes in the company's recreational program during the years you worked in industry? Did the changes make working in the company more or less enjoyable, or did it make little difference? Why?
35. Were company-organized recreational and sports activities a topic of conversation at work? Did the union ever organize a sports team?

### **Mobility:**

36. Did you change jobs during your working years? If yes, why did you change jobs? Describe these jobs and compare them. If not, why not? Did you ever dream of doing other kinds of work?

### **Organization:**

37. Did you ever join a union? Why or why not? What were the circumstances? How was your local union organized? What was your role in the union?
38. How did the union educate workers about its roles and goals? In your opinion, was this education useful / successful? Why or why not?
39. How important was the union in your daily life? Did the union sponsor social events?
40. Did you have a shop steward? What role did he / she play in settling grievances? Did your local union help or disappoint you personally? How much contact did you have with the national? Did you go to national conventions? Who were the principal organizers in your area? Officials?
41. Were you or other workers ever harassed because of union membership?
42. Did the union ever go out on strike? Why? Describe the strike and your participation in it. Who led the strike? Men? Women? Skilled or unskilled labor?
43. How did people in the community (preachers, store owners, neighbors, etc.) react to the strike? How did the police react? What was management's reaction?
44. What broke the strike? What was the impact?
45. What was the overall effect of the union on the company? On you? On your family? Were you aware of other strikes around the region?

### **Feelings about Work:**

46. Were you proud of or embarrassed by the work you did? Why? What did you think of the company's product(s)?

47. What did you like about your work? What did you dislike? Did you look forward to each new day? What is the best thing that has happened to working people in your lifetime?
48. What was the worst thing that happened?
49. Did you ever wish you didn't have to work? When? Why?
50. What do you think about welfare, food stamps, unemployment insurance?
51. Do you do any kind of work in your retirement? What? How does it compare with the work you did years ago?

## Appendix E3: Artifact-Specific Interview (E.g. For Museum or heritage workers)

To be adapted as relevant. Inspired by:

Museums Victoria. (2025). [Preparing an oral history](https://museumsvictoria.com.au/learning/small-object-big-story/4-find-your-stories/preparing-an-oral-history). Museums Victoria. <https://museumsvictoria.com.au/learning/small-object-big-story/4-find-your-stories/preparing-an-oral-history>

Wingo, R. (2022, September 20). [History Harvest interview instructions](https://rebeccawingo.com/historyharvest/s/hh/item/10). Rebeccawingo.com. <https://rebeccawingo.com/historyharvest/s/hh/item/10>  
 Rebecca Wingo is Director of Public History and an Associate Professor of History at University of Cincinnati.

### Generic:

1. What can you tell me about this artifact?
2. What draws you to it?
3. Why is it significant? What sets it apart from the others?
4. **Who** made it? Who was it made **for**? **What** is it made from? **When** was it made? **Where** was it made? **Why** was it made?
  - a. How do you know?

### Historical context

5. What was the historical context where this artifact was developed and used? Did larger historical events (ie. War or a major technological shift) affect its use or popularity?
6. Who might have used an artifact like this? A professional vs. amateur, rich vs. average, civilian vs. military?

### Condition

7. Based on its current state, what can you tell us about its condition? Has it been modified or repaired?
8. Are there specific conservation needs for this type of artifact?
9. Are there particular parts that are especially fragile or prone to damage?

### Provenance

10. Is there anything in the provenance that could be improved?

### **If the interviewee is the donor and/or used the artifact(s):**

11. How did you come to own this artifact? Do you have a personal connection to it?
12. How did you use this artifact in your life/practice?
  - a. What role did this artifact play in your life/practice?
  - b. Is it still used today?
13. Do you have any stories or memories about using this artifact, or a similar artifact(s)?
  - a. Or of other people using similar artifacts?
14. Is there anything else you remember about the artifact(s)?

### **If the artifact has a function:**

15. Can you describe (without touching) the steps involved in using this artifact, from start to finish? What might the user experience have been like?
16. What kind of raw materials did it use? How would a user obtain or prepare those materials?
17. Any specific accessories that would have been used with it? How did that enhance or change its function?

### **If the interviewee is a collector of the artifact genre:**

18. How did you first become interested in (artifact genre)?
  - a. Were you just a user first? If yes, how did you transition to collecting?
19. What is your favourite artifact and why?
20. Do you focus on a particular type of (artifact genre)?
21. Is there a "holy grail" artifact you're hoping to find one day?
22. Do you have a favourite memory or interesting anecdote about the artifacts you've come across?

### **If the artifact(s) was made by the interviewee:**

1. What inspired you to make this? Or why did you feel you had to make it?
2. When and where did you start making this, or similar artifact(s)?
3. Have you pursued formal training in making these artifact(s)? Where?
4. What is your favourite medium to work with? Do you ever stray outside of that medium?
5. What does making the artifact(s) allow you to do?
6. Approximately how many artifacts have you created?
7. Are there any other makers of artifact(s) that inspire you?
8. Does Huron County inspire your work? How long have you lived in Huron County?
9. Is there any more information you'd like to add about you or your work?

## Appendix F: Sample Project Checklist

### Before You Begin

- Define your project goals (What stories do you want to capture? Why?)
- Identify your audience (Who will use these interviews?)
- Choose your format (Audio, video, written?)

### Planning

- Create a list of potential interviewees
- Research background information on your topic
- Prepare interview questions (open-ended, respectful, clear)
- Test your recording equipment

### Consent & Ethics

- Explain the project to participants in plain language
- Provide a Participant Information Form, Consent Form, and Ethics Form
- Confirm participant's comfort level with recording and sharing
- Respect cultural and accessibility needs

### During the Interview

- Find a quiet, comfortable location
- Start with introductions and then easy, warm-up questions
- Listen actively – don't interrupt
- Ask follow-up questions for clarity
- Thank the participant at the end

### After the Interview

- Thank the participant
- Save and back up recordings immediately
- Label files clearly
- Transcribe and/or summarize the interview
- Store consent forms securely