

Ten Tips for a Great Interview

1. Schedule a time in advance. This gives everyone a chance to prepare.
2. Prepare a list of questions beforehand and either share them with your relative, or give them an idea of what you want to cover.
3. Bring several notepads and pens to the interview. If you plan to make a recording, be sure to have a tape player, microphone, extra tapes and batteries.
4. **Take good notes and make sure you record your name, the date, the place the interview is being conducted and the interviewee.**
5. **Ask questions which encourage more than simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. Try to elicit facts, feelings, stories and descriptions.**
6. Show interest. Take an active part in the dialogue without dominating it. Learn to be a creative listener.
7. Use props whenever possible. Old photographs, favorite old songs and treasured items may bring memories flooding back.
8. Use your prepared questions as a guideline, but don't be afraid to let your relative go off on a tangent. They may have many things to say that you never thought to ask!
9. Don't interrupt or attempt to correct your relative; this can end an interview in a hurry!
10. When you are done, be sure to thank your relative for her time. Keep the interview to less than an hour. You don't want it to be too tiring for you or your relative.

From <http://genealogy.about.com/cs/oralhistory/ht/interview.htm>

Remember that you do not want to know this person’s life story at this time. You only want to know about a certain story from that person’s life. It can also be a family story that occurred in the past.

You may begin by explaining the project to your relative like this:

Hi,

This is _____(your name) and I have a writing project that I am working on at school. My job is to interview you and get details about an event or story that happened to you in your life time. This story can be funny, interesting or just something about your past that you think I should know about. I have a list of questions, but feel free to give me as many details as possible. These details will help me create a better story.

1) What is your full name? What year were you born ? Where were you born? How many people are in your family?

2) Where does this story take place? Can you describe this location for me? What year did it occur? During what season of the year?

3) *Why is this story important to you or your family?*

4) *What happened first? Please tell me as much as possible.*

5) *What happened next? This is the important part of the story so get as many details as possible. Use another sheet of paper if need.*

6) *Describe what happened at the end.*

7) *Is there anything else you think that I should know?*
