

Conducting the interview.

1. Get to the interview location on time and prepared!

Things to bring to the interview

- * Your question list, notepad, pen or pencil
- * Recording equipment, (tape/video, microphone, extra tapes, batteries, cables
- * Your question list, and if applicable, any auxilliary materials like photos, articles, etc.

2. Find the quietest place possible. A carpeted living room or bedroom makes for warm, intimate recordings. Avoid large, empty rooms, and stay away from kitchens, which have a lot of reflective surfaces and appliance noise.

Close the door, unplug the phone, make sure your chairs don't creak, turn off anything that is making noise: ticking clocks, buzzing fluorescent lights, air conditioners, fans, etc. Listen and adjust during the interview as well. Never record interviews when there's a radio or television on in the background.

Set up your equipment as early as possible and make sure you're comfortable with it. Before you begin your interview, record your storyteller talking for a few seconds to make sure everything is working. Ask warm-up questions like, "Tell me what you had for breakfast." Stop, rewind, and listen to the recording you just made to make sure everything is working.

3. Begin the conversation.

Begin your recording session with small talk to help put your storyteller at ease. If you haven't already; explain the purpose of the interview and what you'll want to talk about in the interview.

Record the introduction. Start by stating your name, age, date, and location of the interview.

Then ask your storyteller to state the same information. Repeat this procedure at the start of any new tapes. Remember during your interview to double check that the recorder is actually recording (not on pause).

Use your question list. If something interests you, ask more questions. Sometimes your storyteller will need "permission" to expand on a certain topic. Saying, "Tell me more" will allow you to uncover "golden nuggets" of information. Don't feel you need to be talking all the time. Use visual cues like nodding your head. Take breaks if you need them.

4. Get great stories.

The best interview is simply a conversation. It should feel like your storyteller is just being him or herself. Listen closely. Look at your storyteller's eyes, not the recording equipment. Stay interested and engaged. When you hear something that moves you, feel free to talk about it more. Help the storyteller be more descriptive by asking to "paint a picture with words" or ask emotional questions like "How does this make you feel?"

Take notes during the interview. Write down any questions or stories you might want to return to later in your interview. If you think the current topic isn't interesting, steer the conversation somewhere else. Be yourself. You can laugh with the person you are interviewing. Real moments are the best moments.

Don't be afraid to record again. If the storyteller garbles words or makes a mistake, ask him to repeat himself. If a story never quite gets to the end or your storyteller loses his train of thought, you can ask for the ending again.

5. Wrap it up.

Before you turn off your recorder, do two things:

Ask the storyteller if there is anything else that she wants to talk about, and express your gratitude.

Inform your interviewee what are the next follow-up steps. (Another interview, review of materials, etc.)

Label and write-protect your tapes or MiniDiscs and store them in a cool place out of direct sunlight.