

This quick start guide covers the basics for conducting personal oral histories with narrators. It will bullet point steps to consider before, during, and after the interview as well as providing a handful of questions to reflect on. Neither the guide or the source list are comprehensive and users are encouraged to delve deeper into the topic to learn more.

Pre-Interview

- Identify and reach out to a narrator. If they are interested in being interviewed, talk about what topics you would like to cover, how long you are planning for the interview, and inform them of your plan to record the interview and the need for release documentation.
- Identify a date and location for the interview
 - The Fond du Lac Public library does have a recording booth in the Ideas Studio. Interested patrons can learn more on the library website.
 - The library also loans out recording devices from the circulation desk on the first floor.
 - The ideal location for an interview will limit the amount of noise and distractions
- Before meeting with your narrator, have an outline for the interview this might include topics and questions that you as an interviewer want to cover. It should also probably provide you an outline or script for opening and closing statements.

During the Interview

- Open with a general statement outlining for the listener who you are, the date, location, and your narrator. You may also choose to use this time to visually describe both yourself and the narrator for the listener
 - You could also ask the narrator if they are willing to describe themselves. The purpose here is two-fold
 - First, it might be a fun icebreaking exercise for both you and your narrator
 - Second in terms of accessibility your audience will be listening to the interview, they do not get the normal visual queues that come with viewing a film, or photo.

After the Interview

- Be sure to thank your narrator, and clearly wrap up the interview for the listener with a short closing statement.
- Consider transcribing the interview.

Sources:

Sommer, Barbara and Mary Kay Quinlan. *The Oral History Manual* Third Edition. Rowman Littlefield, Lanham. 2018.

“Oral History Association Archives Principles and Best Practices Complete Manual” *Oral History Association*. 2019

Developing Questions for a Personal Interview

The questions have also been outlined with the goal of learning more about the interviewee themselves as opposed to a specific location, event, or time period.

1. Collect some basic information about the narrator. What is your name, where and when were you born, and who else was in your family (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc)
2. What did your parents do for a living?
3. Were other relatives close by?
4. What are some especially strong memories you have of your childhood life?
5. What were some of your favorite stories to hear while you were growing up?
6. Did your older relatives ever talk to you about their experiences growing up?
7. What was school like when you were there?
 - a. Did you have a favorite class
8. Can you talk to me about your friends growing up?
 - a. What did you all do for fun
 - b. Did any of them move away
9. Was there a teacher or adult figure you really looked up to as a kid?
10. What was your first job?
11. Is there anything you miss the most about the old days?
12. If you could tell future generations one thing, what would it be?