



## Interviewing Tips

- Be mindful of noise: fiddling with jewelry, tapping, and movement. Turn off all cell- phones.
- Don't make noise when your storyteller is talking. Don't say, "uh huh," or interrupt while the storyteller is talking. Instead, use visual cues like nodding your head.
- Use a question list. Remember, the questions are meant as a suggestion and a guide.
- The ID is an important part of every interview. Start by stating your name, your age, the date, and the location of the interview. For example, "Hi, my name is Mark. I'm forty-one years old. The date is September, 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and we're sitting here in my office in New York City." Now ask your storyteller to state the same information. Repeat this procedure at the start of any new disc.
- The best interview is simply a conversation. It should feel like your storyteller is just being him/herself.
  - Begin your session with warm-up questions or small talk to help put your storyteller at ease. If you haven't already, let him/her know why you want to interview him/her and what, generally, you'll want to talk about in the interview.
- Ask emotional questions. Questions like "How did you feel at the time?" often elicit thoughtful responses. Don't be afraid to ask.
  - Asked open-ended questions. Open-ended questions typically begin with words such as "Why" and "How", or phrases such as "Tell me about...".
- Help the storyteller be more descriptive. When you need your storyteller to describe something, it can help to ask her to "paint a picture with words" or have them describe what a moment would look like caught in a photograph.



- Trust your instincts. If something interests you or bears exploring, ask more questions. Sometimes your storyteller will need your "permission" to explore a certain topic; granting that permission might mean nothing more than showing your interest, or saying, "Tell me more."
  - Think of the question list as a crutch. If you get tongue-tied or need a place to start, use it, but don't let it constrain you. Feel free to ask questions in whatever order feels right.
- Stick with the good stuff. When you hear something that moves you, feel free to talk about it more. When you see the storyteller's eyes light up, go with that topic.
- Don't be afraid to ask a question again. If the storyteller garbles words or makes a mistake, ask him/her to repeat their self. If a story never quite gets to the end or your storyteller loses his/her train of thought, you can ask for the ending again. Make sure you are happy with what you're recording. You can record as many times as necessary (as long as you're not driving your storyteller crazy).
- Be yourself. You can laugh with the person you are interviewing or even cry with them. Real moments are the best moments.
- Take notes during the interview. Write down any questions or stories you might want to return to later in your interview, but be mindful of noise.
- Before you end, do two things: Ask the storyteller if there is anything else that she wants to talk about, and thank him/her. Sharing a story can be difficult for some people. Express your gratitude by letting her know it was a privilege having him/her share his/her story with you.