

Become an oral historian

Find out about a member of your family by recording them talking about their life.

Before you start

You need to write down their name, date of birth and date of interview; perhaps you could include a photo of how they look now.

Then follow these step-by-step rules for a good interview technique:

1. Talk to your interviewee about what you would like them to tell you.
2. Show them your questions.
3. Start recording (you could use a phone, tablet, or other tape or mp3 recorder).
4. Introduce the topic, e.g. 'I would like you to tell me about your childhood memories'.
5. LET THEM TALK! Encourage them with nods and smiles, but try not to make too much noise yourself. Make notes of anything that you think you'd like to know more about, but don't interrupt them. Save your questions to the end and then ask them one by one.

Sample questions to find out about childhood in the past:

- Where did you live when you were small?
- Where did you go to school?
- How old were you when you started school?
- What did you like/dislike about school?
- Did you ever get into trouble, and if so what for?
- What punishments did they give you at school?
- What did you do used to do for fun?
- What games did you like to play?
- What was the most exciting thing you can remember from being a child?
- What stories did your grandparents tell you about when they were children?

If you're happy you've got all the information you need, why not try interviewing other family members. Think about what you have learned, and how your family's experiences are different from your own.