

A beginners guide to carrying out an oral history



Are you interested in recording the memories of someone in your family or someone you are caring for? An oral history is interviewing someone to record their memories and opinions about a particular subject.

Before you begin you will need

- Recording equipment - this could be a voice or video recorder on your phone or tablet.
- Pen and paper if you are writing down their memories.
- The questions you are going to ask.
- A quiet, comfortable space (or as quiet as you can find).

Top tips

- If you are recording the interview, make sure you have enough battery and you press the record button.
- Ask open questions - *Can you tell me about? What was it like? How did you feel? What do you think about? Tell me more about?*
- Listen carefully and avoid interrupting - it is not a conversation.
- Write down questions that come to mind during the interview and ask them once the interviewee has finished answering your questions.
- Don't worry about silences - sometimes more is said when you allow for silence.
- If you can, save the recording on a computer as it may get lost on your phone or tablet.
- Transcribe the interview- type up what is said by the interviewee and the interviewer.

Provide the interviewee with a copy of the transcript so that they can fill in anything you're unsure of and can confirm they are happy with the interview.

- Type up your notes and save them in a place you know you can find in the future.

It's important to ask the person you are interviewing for their permission to take their story. If you are recording or filming the interviewee, ask them to state that they are happy for their story to be recorded.

Starting your interview...

Make an introductory statement at the start of each audio or video recording.

- Introduce yourself.
- Introduce who you are going to interview
- State when and where the interview is taking place.

If you are carrying out the interview over the telephone, write down:

- The full name of the person carrying out the interview.
- The full name of the person being interviewed.
- The date and where the interview is taking place.

Example

Sarah: *"This is Sarah Jones interviewing Katie Smith on 24 March 2020 in Canton, Cardiff".*

"Katie do you agree to be interviewed and recorded?"

Katie: *"Yes".*