



## Industry Oral History Interview Guide

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### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Do a preliminary interview to obtain discussion ideas.
  - Remind the interviewee of his/her appointment.
  - Provide them with a copy of the questions, it puts people at more ease when they can anticipate the line of inquiry. Some informants prefer to answer the questions themselves, much like an open narrative, while others prefer answering questions that you ask.
  - Practice with the tape recorder before hand or make sure your mp3 player has fully charged batteries.
  - Bring extra cassettes if needed and a pen and paper.
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### CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

- Choose a quiet place for the interview to avoid background noise.
  - Introduce yourself with a handshake (be sensitive to the pressure since many elderly people suffer from arthritis).
  - Offer a beverage or water.
  - Fill out a release form.
  - Record a formal introduction: full name, date, address, telephone number
  - Establish rapport with eye contact and empathetic listening.
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### AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- After an interview is done, write up a brief summary of the main topics discussed.
  - Send thank you letters and follow-up information.
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### INTERVIEW TIPS

- Interview only one person at a time. It will save on confusion recognizing different voices later when you listen to your interview.
- Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer. Use words like **describe, tell me about, explain, expand on, or compare.**
- Ask one question at a time.
- Keep your questions brief.
- Start with non-controversial questions; you want to make your interviewee as comfortable as possible. Save the delicate questions, if there are any, until later in the interview.

- Don't be flustered by brief moments of silence and don't worry if your questions don't come out as perfectly as you planned.
  - Do not interrupt a good story
  - If you think of another question during the interview, make note of it to ask after the interviewee is finished speaking.
  - Try to establish at important points in the interview where the narrator was or what his or her role was in an event. This will help you to determine how much of the account is based on eyewitness account and how much is based on the reports of others. You want to get as much detail as possible.
  - Don't challenge accounts you think may be inaccurate.
  - Occasionally you may disagree or be angered by a response from an informant – racism being the most prevalent example. It is difficult to show encouragement for dialogue when you are upset by the content. Keep in mind that the entire point of oral histories is to capture the moods and attitudes of people. This includes the good and the not so good. You don't have to agree with opinions that you don't agree with, but do remain neutral.
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### **PERSONAL HISTORY QUESTIONS**

1. What is your name?
2. When were you born?
3. Where have you lived?
4. Where have you worked? Name of company, organization and city.

*Identify one type of work you are interested in asking about.*

### **INDUSTRY QUESTIONS**

5. What do/did you do in your work?
6. When did you start to work in this industry?
7. How long have you done/did you do this work?
8. What is/was it like to work there?
9. What did/do you wear?
10. What kind of tools did/do you use?
11. What people did/do you work with?
12. Is the work you do dangerous?
13. How does the work you do effect the community?
14. How does the work you do effect the environment?
15. How has the work changed since you began working?

*Add more of your own questions.*

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM**

**NAME OF INTERVIEWEE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE OF INTERVIEW:** \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to the recording and preservation of  
(interviewee)  
an interview of myself by \_\_\_\_\_. I agree that this  
(interviewer)  
interview may be preserved in audio format on the computer, compact disc, transcribed, and/or  
printed by the interviewer. It is understood that the said interview is to be kept by the  
interviewer and made available for educational purposes.

I hereby waive any claim against \_\_\_\_\_, with respect to the use of the  
(interviewer)  
information, provided it is used in accordance with this agreement. I do this freely and with full  
knowledge of the legal consequences of this consent.

**CONDITIONS: NONE** \_\_\_\_ **OR:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEWEE'S SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEWER'S SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_