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**Oral History Interviewing Tips**

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PRE-INTERVIEW

1. Be prepared.  
    - Know your purpose.  
    - Have some background information so you can ask more informed questions.  
    - Create an outline of topics and questions.
2. Communicate with your subject.  
    - Agree on a probable length of the interview.  
    - Get a signed release form.
3. Practice with your equipment

INTERVIEW

1. Make the room as quiet as possible.
2. Run a test recording first to check your recording levels.
3. Open with a “lead” – state the names of the interviewer and interviewee, date and year, location of the interview.
4. Take notes – get the spelling of names, jot down new questions.
5. Start with easier, factual questions.
6. Ask open-ended questions to invite reflection and further elaboration.
7. Listen carefully.
8. Give the subject time to pause and think.
9. Don’t be judgmental or let your own opinions show.
10. Be willing to go in another direction if the subject wants.
11. Respect the subject’s right to refuse to discuss certain topics or to stop at any time.
12. Use photographs, clothing, jewelry, documents, etc. to help jog memories.
13. You are responsible for gauging if the subject is getting tired.
14. At the end, ask the subject if there is anything else to add that you didn’t ask about.
15. Thank the subject

POST-INTERVIEW

1. If you wish, create a transcription.
2. If you wish, create an audio or video recording log.
3. If you are including photographs, get the permission of the people in the photos if you plan to donate them.
4. If you donate any part of the project to an institution, spell out what you are allowing the institution to do with the material.
5. You might want to interview others – family friends – for more information.