

A Script for Video or Audio Interviews with Family Members

feel free to print and distribute as needed

The tape should open with the interviewer giving their name, the date, the location, and any other descriptive information that seems pertinent.

Be sure to give the interviewee sufficient time to answer questions and/or think about their answers. Half the key here is don't rush...and feel free to stick in other questions that come to mind. It's surprising how digging out one memory will lead to others long forgotten....be sure to give the person plenty of time to talk.

Basic questions will be in the main color...followup questions that depend on the answer to the main questions will be in this color.

Family History Section

1. What is your full name?
2. Is there anything special or unusual about your name or the way you were named?
3. When and where were you born?
So that makes you ____ years old now, right?
4. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
What are their names and ages?
5. What are your parents' names and when and where were they born?
6. Are they still living?
(If answer is no) When did (he/she/they) die?
7. What (are/were) your parents' occupations?
8. Did you know your grandparents?
What can you tell me about them?
9. What can you tell me about your family farther back than your grandparents?
10. What is your ethnic origin, and how has it affected your life?
11. Is there anything else you can share with me about your family history?
Any unusual events or famous persons?
Is your family well known for anything?

Early Childhood Memories

1. Now I'd like you to think back to the earliest thing you can remember.....how old were you and what was going on?
2. What (else) do you remember about the time before you went to school?

3. Where did you live when you were little, and what did your house look like?
4. Did you go to school before elementary school?
(If yes) Please tell me about it.

Elementary School Memories

1. Where did you go to elementary school and what year did you start?
2. Now I'd like you to think back to an incident in grade school which you remember well....what was going on?
3. What are some other vivid memories of your elementary school years?
4. How were your grades in grammar school?
5. How did you spend your summers during grade school?
6. Did you have any pets when you were little?
(If yes) Please tell me about them.
7. While you were growing up, did you have any sense of whether your family was rich or poor, and what would you say now about your family's economic circumstances when you were growing up?
8. Were you happy as a young child?
9. What would you say about your relationship with your parents?

High School Memories

1. Where, and in what years, did you go to high school?
2. Where did you live during this time?
3. Now I'd like you to think back to an incident in high school which you remember well....what was going on?
4. How were your grades in high school, and did you graduate?
5. What subjects and/or teachers did you particularly enjoy?
6. What social group did you belong to in high school what kind of kids did you associate with?
7. Who were your best friends during high school, and are you still in contact with any of them?
8. Did you have a favorite sport, and were you on any teams?
9. Who was the first (boy/girl) you ever seriously kissed, how old were you, and what were the circumstances?
10. Did you attend your senior prom, and if so, who was your date, and what was it like?
11. If you could have changed one thing about your high school years, what would it have been?
12. What was going on in your family when you were in high school?
13. Did your family take vacations, and if so, what were they like?
14. How would you sum up your childhood and adolescence?

Higher Education

1. Did you attend any college or vocational school after high school?
(If no, skip to the military section)
 2. (If yes) When and where did you go, why did you choose to go there, and what did you study?
 3. How did you do there, and did you graduate?
 4. How did you pay for the schooling?
 5. Now I'd like you to think back on an incident in this time that you remember well....what was going on?
 6. Who were your best friends from this period of time, and do you still see any of them?
 7. Who did you date during this period of your life, and what sort of things did you do on your dates?
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Military Service

1. Did you serve in the Armed Forces?
(If no, skip to the adult section)
 2. When, and under what circumstances?
 3. What was it like?
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Adult Life

1. When did you leave home, under what circumstances, and where did you go?
 2. Where have you lived during your adult life?
 3. What did you do between the time you (left home/graduated) and the time you got married?
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Career

1. What was your (first, second, etc) job after you left home?
2. Did you enjoy this work?
(Repeat the above two questions as necessary to get up to the present.)
3. What about your career have you found most satisfying?
4. What about your career would you like to have done differently?
5. Are you now, or have you ever been prominent, famous, or well known for anything?

Marriage

For this section, you need to ascertain how many times the person's been married....skip this and the children section if you're talking to someone who's never been married. The first five questions should be repeated for each time the person's been married.

1. What is your spouse's name, and when, where, and how did you meet?
2. What did you do on your first date?
3. What was your courtship like?
4. How long after you met did you get married?
(If more than one marriage) How did this marriage end?
5. What would you say is the most important thing about choosing a spouse?
6. In what ways has marriage turned out to be different than you expected?

Children

If you've ascertained that the person's never had children, skip this section

1. When were your children born and what are their names?
2. I'd like you to think back to the day your first child was born....what was the experience like for you?
3. What are some special memories of raising your children?
4. What is the best thing about children, and what is the most frustrating thing?
5. What is it like to be a grandparent?
Skip this question if the person has no grandchildren

Travel and Other Interests

1. Do you enjoy travelling, and where have you gone?
2. What would you say has been your greatest adventure so far?
3. What interests and hobbies do you have, and what do you like to do for fun?
4. What organizations do you belong to?
5. The last time you voted in a presidential election, who did you vote for and why?
6. Is politics important to you?

History

Choose the questions based on the person's age...and be creative, if the focus of their life was/is at a different historical time.

1. What impact, if any, did World War One have on your life or your family?
2. What impact, if any, did the Great Depression have on your life or your family?
3. What impact, if any, did World War Two have on your life or your family?
4. What impact, if any, did the Korean War have on your life or your family?
5. What impact, if any, did the Vietnam War and the Sixties have on your life or your family?

Taking Stock and Summation

1. Now to take stock.....as of this point in your life, has your life turned out as you imagined it would?
2. What's been your greatest accomplishment so far?
3. What's been your greatest disappointment or frustration?
4. What's the most important thing in your life right now?
5. What would you have done differently in your life, if you'd known then what you know now?
6. What are your goals right now and what do you hope to accomplish next?
7. If you could do anything you wanted to do, what would it be?
8. What do you think will be the major world events of the next ten years?
9. What are the most important things you've learned about life thus far?
10. What is your philosophy of life?
11. What role does religion play in your life?
12. Now...for some advice for your great-grandchildren....what would you say to them about the area of education?
13. What about choosing and managing careers?
14. What advice would you give them about money?
15. What do you have to say to them about love and marriage?
16. What about how to raise children?
17. Since future generations of your family will be watching this, what do you have to say to them?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add or to say to complete things?

At this point, thank the person for allowing you to interview them, state again for the camera the date, your name and the interviewee's name, and then have the person running the camera or tape recorder stop the tape.