



History Happening Now: Share Your Story

Interview Questions

Oral Historians have to be good at asking questions and good at listening. This is really important if you want to get the best information from your narrator.

Try it Out!

Let's take a closer look at different kinds of questions that can be asked. Find a partner and ask them the following questions.

1. "Do you like cookies?" Listen closely and write down their answer.

2. "What is your favorite kind of cookie?" Listen closely and write down their answer.

3. "Can you tell me about a time when you made or ate your favorite kind of cookie?" Listen closely and write down their answer.

What did you notice about the different questions you asked?

Which question gave you a quick answer? Why is that?

Which question gave you more information? Why do you think that?

Types of Questions



- **Closed-ended questions** like “do you like cookies” and “what is your favorite kind of cookie?” are good for getting clear and short answers, but they won’t encourage narrators to tell stories or share their experiences.
- **Open-ended questions** like “will you tell me about a time...” encourage people to share their experience and to tell a story.

Both kinds of questions and good follow up questions will help you get the best information from your narrator!



What you want to know!

The first step to creating interview questions is to think about what you want to know! Brainstorm topics or experience you would like to learn about from your narrator.

What are 3 things you know about your narrator?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are 3 things you want to know about your narrator?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Let's write questions!

The next step is to turn what you want to know into questions, paying careful attention so that they are a combination of closed and open-ended questions.

Thinking about the things you want to know, come up with 2 closed-ended questions and follow-up questions that continues the conversation and encourages the speaker to share more:

Question: _____

Possible Follow-Up Question: _____

Question: _____

Possible Follow-Up Question: _____

Thinking about the things you want to know, come up with 4 open-ended questions.

Question: _____

Question: _____

Question: _____

Question: _____

Now that you have written questions for your Oral History Interview, think about the order in which you ask the questions.

You want to make sure the order makes sense. You would not want to ask someone about their favorite food to eat and then ask them where they were born.

Number the questions in the order you are going to ask them.



Being a Good Listener during an Oral History Interview

Be a Whole Body Listener

What should your Ears be doing?

What should your Brain be doing?

What should your Mouth be doing?

What should your Eyes be doing?

What should your Body be doing?

How should your hand be?

How should your feet be?

