

Guide to Conducting Oral History Interviews

1. Prepare for the Interview

- Familiarize yourself with the Zoom recorder's operation instructions. Feel free to practice ahead of the interview. You can also use a cell phone to record interviews.
- Choose a quiet location for the interview to minimize background noise.
- Prepare a list of questions in advance but be flexible to follow-up on interesting responses.
- Test the equipment before the interview to ensure it's working properly.
- Put the recording device in a place where it will capture the best audio. Feel free to readjust its position if necessary.
- Take a listen with your headphones on to make sure the area is suitable for recording.
- Give an overview of the kind of questions you might ask so that the interviewee will not be caught off guard.

2. Take Photographs (with permission)

- If you can take a photo of the setting of the interview
- Take a portrait of the interviewee.
- If it is an interview on a specific topic, you can take photos of tools, materials, finished crafts, instruments etc.
- Take scans, if possible, of any personal photos or documents that might be relevant to the interview.

3. Start the Interview

- Begin by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of the interview.
- Ask the interviewee for permission to record the conversation, ask if you can record this response to have permission to record it.
- Set a relaxed tone to make the interviewee feel comfortable.
- Hit record and check to make sure it is recording. State the date, names, place etc. (You can write this down ahead of time to make sure you are pronouncing their name correctly if needed)
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4. Conducting the Interview

- Ask open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses.

- Listen actively and show genuine interest in the interviewee's stories.
- Allow pauses for the interviewee to collect their thoughts.
- Avoid interrupting and be respectful of the interviewee's pace.
- It is ok to ask for clarification and to take notes.

5. Sample Questions

- Ask if they could introduce themselves and tell them where they were born etc.?
- What are your earliest memories of Fayetteville?
- Can you describe a typical day in Fayetteville when you were growing up?
- How has Fayetteville changed over the years, and what do you miss most about the old days?
- Can you share a memorable story or event from your time in Fayetteville?

6. Closing the Interview

- Thank the interviewee for sharing their stories and experiences.
- Ask if there's anything else they'd like to add.
- Remind them of the purpose of the project and how their stories will be preserved.

7. After the Interview

- Label the recording with the interviewee's name and date of the interview.
- Store the recording in a safe place.
- You can return your recording to the Fayetteville Visitor Center, and we can archive the interview for you with transcribing software.

8. Optional: Sharing the Interview

- With the interviewee's permission, share the recording on the Find Fayetteville project platform.
- Respect the interviewee's wishes regarding the sharing of their story.

9. Follow-Up

- Keep in touch with the interviewees to update them on the project's progress.
- Consider conducting follow-up interviews to delve deeper into specific topics.

By following this guide, you can help preserve the rich history, arts, culture, food, and outdoor recreation of Fayetteville, WV, for future generations to enjoy.

