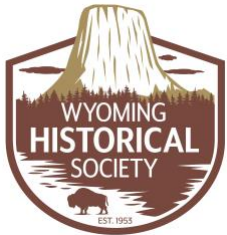




Oral History Interview Guidelines

Recording personal stories is an important part of documenting history and can supplement other information found in newspapers and books. To hear a person's voice, as well as see their image on video as they relate their memories can add much to the recording of history. With that in mind, the Oral History Committee presents these tips for conducting an oral interview.

1. Pick whom you want to interview and what information you might like to learn.
2. Tell the interviewee what the purpose of the interview is and what subjects. Tell them how the interview will be conducted – whether audio tape or video, and how long it should take. They also will want to know what happens to the information in the interview. If they agree to the process, then you can plan to do the interview.
3. Have the interviewee sign a release form giving their permission for the recording and future use of the interview in audio, visual, or print form.
4. Set a time and a place to conduct the interview.
5. Select a place that will be quiet without distracting background noise – or others in the room. It should be a one-to-one situation.
6. Check out your recording equipment in advance whether it be video or just audio equipment, so you are familiar with it, as well as to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Decide whether you will be using an internal, tabletop or lapel microphones,
7. Plan for the interview by gathering background information on the interviewee and prepare a list of questions in advance to guide the interview toward the subject that you hope to learn more about.



8. Before you start the interview – put a lead-in on the video tape or sound recording that gives the name of the interviewee, the interviewer, the date and location of the interview, as well as the proposed subject of the interview.
9. Ask one question at a time, with easy questions first to help put the interviewee at ease.
10. Ask open-ended questions rather than those which have a yes or no answer.
11. Take notes during the interview, jotting down the names of people and places mentioned that you might want to check with the interviewee afterwards to ensure correct spelling.
12. Be an active listener as the interview progresses which might suggest other topics to discuss, Jot down other questions you might want to ask.
13. Try not to interrupt the interviewee with more questions until he or she is finished with their train of thought.
14. There may be times when the interviewee pauses to think about something. Don't rush on to the next question. People need time to get their thoughts in order before speaking so just wait.
15. Guide the interviewee along with follow up questions that may not be on your original list.
16. When it is evident that the interviewee has finished, ask if there is anything else that he or she would like to tell you about that they may have forgotten.
17. Conclude by thanking the interviewee and telling them when you expect to have a transcript of the interview available for them to review.
18. After the transcript has been reviewed and any corrections made or sections deleted, proceed with archiving and distributing as planned.
19. Lastly, take a photograph of the person being interviewed. Be sure to identify the person and the date of the interview.