



Suggested Guidelines for Recorded Interviews

1. Prepare for the interview by
 - researching your topic
 - finding out some basic details about your research collaborator
 - testing your equipment
 - organizing a list of questions or topics that will help you think about and guide what you want your research collaborator to cover during the interview
2. Before the interview (on the phone or in person), and again at the time of the interview, clearly and accurately explain to your research collaborator
 - who you are
 - why you want to do the interview
 - and what will happen to the information you collect
3. Be yourself. Don't pretend to know more about someone or something than you do know.
4. Never record secretly.
5. Before the interview begins, determine the best location, especially when in someone's else's house or space, that will produce a clear recording with no distracting extraneous noises or visual interference (for video recordings).
6. At the start of the recording, make a brief opening statement that specifies the date and place of the interview, names of the people in the recording, yourself included, and the general topic of the interview.
7. Keep the recording device running throughout the interview. Only turn the machine off when asked to do so or when an interruption requires it.
8. During the interview, encourage the interviewee by paying attention. Avoid looking at your list of questions or topics or adjusting the equipment, unless absolutely necessary. CAREFUL LISTENING is critical to the interview process.
9. Keep your questions short and avoid complicated multi-part questions.
10. Never ask questions you don't understand.
11. Avoid questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no". You are not just after the facts that can be asked via a questionnaire – you want STORIES, NARRATIVES and EXPLANATIONS.
12. Avoid leading questions or ones that already suggest an answer.
13. Try to keep your opinions out of the interview
14. Don't begin the interview with questions about controversial topics.
15. Don't interrupt your informant's answers or thought process.



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16. Use follow-up or probe questions to elicit more detailed information:
 - “When did that happen?”
 - “Did that happen to you?”
 - “What are the steps in doing that?”
 - “Can you give me an example of that?”
17. Be prepared to let the interview go in different directions than the one you planned.
18. Make the recording as complete and accurate a record of the interview as you can. Give spoken clues or information so that listeners can understand what is being described in the conversation.
19. Consider using photographs, maps and other materials to elicit stories and information.
20. Keep your interviews to a reasonable length. Be prepared to ask for a follow-up interview if the individual wants to talk or has more stories to narrate. If you make plans to continue the conversation at another time, follow through with that promise.
21. Make a brief closing announcement at the end of the interview.
22. Obtain the interviewee's consent with a release form
23. Fill out the data sheet that accompanies an interview completely and accurately.
24. Review the recording, carefully and note useful leads to other community members or historical materials and inquiries, or information that you want to clarify in a follow-up interview. Use the review process to complete all the required supporting documentation – field notes, audio logs and summaries.

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(modified: Guha Shankar, AFC)