

Conducting a good interview

What *not* to do:

- Do not force your beliefs or opinions on the narrator.
- Do not force responses to sensitive questions.
- Do not ask leading questions or closed questions (see examples in the charts below.).
- Do not draw attention to the recorder.
- Do not make a lot of noise.
- Do not argue with the narrator.
- Do not make the interview very long so you and the narrator get very tired.
- Do not dominate the interview by giving long answers to questions the narrator asks you.

Choice of questions

Choose neutral and open questions (and not leading and closed questions)

LEADING QUESTIONS	NEUTRAL QUESTIONS
You must have been happy on election night.	How did you feel on election night?
You didn't like Mr. X, did you?	Tell me about Mr. X.
What do you think of Mr. Jones' outrageous behavior?	What did Mr. Jones do then?

CLOSED QUESTIONS	OPEN-ENDED OR EVOCATIVE QUESTIONS
Where were your parents born?	What did your parents tell you about their lives?
Did your family have gatherings?	Describe your family gatherings.
What holidays did your family celebrate?	How were holidays celebrated in your family?
Was religion important to your family?	Tell me about religious observances in your family.
Did you and your friends play games as children?	Describe some games you played as a child?
When did you finish school?	How did your formal education end?
Were you in the service during World War II?	Tell me about your life during World War II.
Did you get a job after the war?	Tell me what you did after you got out of the service.
Did you like your job?	How did you feel about your job?

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