

Sample interview questions (you need NOT use them all!!!)

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FOR THE AUTHOR:

- How are you related to the person you are interviewing?
- Why are you interested in interviewing this person in particular?
- What do think makes this person special?

PERSONAL DATA (to be asked of the person you interview)

- What is your birth date? Where were you born?
- What stories were you told about your birth? Were there any special or unusual circumstances?
- Were you born in a hospital or at home?
- What is your full name and how was it chosen?
- Who in your family do you most resemble physically?
- Who in your family do you most resemble in personality?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Where do you fit in the birth order?
- Who are your siblings? What are their names and birth dates?
- To whom did you feel closest as a child? To whom do you feel closest now?
- Describe a memory or two you will never forget involving your brother(s) and/or sister(s).
- Tell why this memory stands out in your mind.

ABOUT THE FAMILY

- From which country/ies did your family's ancestors emigrate?
- When was this and where did they settle?
- What stories were you told as a child?
- What stories of family experiences were you told?
- What were you told about how your family came to this country?
- What are your parents' names? What was your mother's maiden name?
- Where were they each born?
- What do you remember most about your mother (your father) from your childhood?
- How would you describe your father's personality: jovial, short-tempered, finicky, easy going
- How did your mother (your father) spend most of her (his) time?
- What was her (his) primary occupation?
- What did she (he) do for pleasure?
- How would you describe your mother's personality: jovial, short-tempered, finicky, easy going
- How did your family spend time together?
- How did your family relax or play together?
- If you had vacations, where did you go?
- Please tell about a favorite vacation/ a worst vacation.
- What did "home" look like (furnishings, appliances, etc.)
- Was another language besides English spoken in your home? What was it? Who spoke it?
- Was religion an important part of your family life?
- Did your family attend a church, synagogue, temple or practice other spiritual approaches?
- Did your family seem to have enough money? Was money a family concern?
- What were one or two of the worst times in your family life? The best times?

EARLY LIFE (ages 2-12)

- What was your first memory going back as far as you can?
- Where did you live? What did you do for fun?
- Did you have any nicknames? What were they? Did you like or dislike them? Why?

- Did you have any pets? Tell me about them....
- Please describe your favorite toy or game.
- Were you ever very sick? Did you ever have a big accident (like breaking a bone)?
- What do you remember about grammar school? How did you get there? Who were your favorite teacher/s? Why was he/she special? What did he/she teach that stands out in your mind?
- What did you want to be when you grew up? What did your parents want you to do or be?
- What did things like this cost when you were young: clothes, food, movies, toys, gasoline, stamps
- What do you think has changed the most since you were young?
- What do you wish had not changed?

GROWING UP (ages 12-20)

- What household chores or jobs did you have to do?
- How did things get cleaned and maintained when you were a child?
- Did you get an allowance? How much? How did you spend it?
- What was school like (school house, classroom/s, desks)
- What parts of school did you like the most? The least?
- What "tools" did you use to complete schoolwork (chalk, paper, slide rules, etc.)
- Did you play sports in school? Which ones?
- Were you involved in music or drama activities? Any other activities?
- Did you receive any awards or prizes for anything?
- Were you a member of any clubs? What songs or dances were popular?
- What or who most influenced your thinking during this time in your life? Why?
- As a teenager, did you get along with your parents?
- What kind of clothing did you wear?
- At what point did you move away from home? Why did you move? Where did you go?

FAMILY CELEBRATIONS AND TRADITIONS WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP

- Did you celebrate any special family, religious or ethnic holidays in your home? Describe.
- As a child, how was your birthday usually commemorated?
- What was the best gift you ever received when you were young? What occasion prompted the gift? Why was this gift so special to you?
- What was the best gift you ever gave? Why? Who was the recipient of your gift?
- Were traditional or favorite recipes prepared for special family events or celebrations?
- What were the recipes for? What were the occasions? May I copy a recipe for my story?
- What were the "rites of passage" for you as you grew up? Were they formally or informally noted?
- What family or holiday traditions have been the most meaningful to you?
- What music, songs or dances were part of your childhood?
- What instruments did family members play?
- What expressions/slang terms were used in the things people said?

WHEN YOU GOT MARRIED.....

- How did you meet Grandma/Grandpa?
- How old were you when you first met?
- What attracted you to Grandma/Grandpa?
- When and where was the wedding? What can you tell me about that special day?
- Did you have a honeymoon? What are you willing to tell about it?
- Were there any surprises in your adjustment to married life?
- Were there any cooking disasters?
- Please tell a favorite story about Grandma/Grandpa.
- How were times different when you were first married?
- What did you do for entertainment, what transportation was available?
- How did you cook, clean, shop and raise your family?
- What do we have now that we did not have then? What do we not have now that you wish we still had?

BIG EVENTS IN YOUR LIFE

- Tell about the births of your children? Names and birth dates, please!
- Tell about the births of your grandchildren and great grandchildren. Names and birth dates, please!
- What was it like to be a new parent?
- What do you especially remember about raising my mother/father?
- What do you especially remember about raising your other children?
- What did my mother/father do that made you feel especially proud? Angry? Excited? Happy? Disgusted?
- What parts of being a parent have been the easiest or most rewarding?
- What parts of being a parent have been the hardest or most frustrating?
- What were the most trying times for you as you raised your family? Why?
- What is the funniest thing that has ever happened to you?
- What memories make you feel proud? Why?
- What moments in your life embarrassed you? Why?
- Please share with me if you can, memories of your saddest or most painful times in life?
- Apart from school, what have been your most important learning experiences?
- Describe an event that in your mind let you know your family had entered a "new modern era"
- Have you ever been hospitalized? Where and why?
- What was your first job; part time or full time... How much were you paid? What were your responsibilities?
- What have been your favorite hobbies or past times?
- Where have you lived as an adult? What was your favorite place to live/least favorite place?
- Where have you traveled? What did you see or have happen on the trip(s) that you remember especially?
- Were you in the military? Where? When? Were you serving during a wartime? What was your job?
- If you lived through a war time, what was it and what do you remember the most about that time?
- Did you receive education beyond grammar school? Where did you go to school? What was the highest grade you accomplished?
- Do you hold any degrees? Did you receive any awards in education or in anything else?
- Have you ever met anyone famous? What can you tell me about them?
- As you look back, are there any time periods that especially stand out? Describe them and tell what was special about them?
- Are there times in your life you'd like to live over? Describe and tell why?
- As you look back, are there things you would do differently if you were doing them now?
- Is there anything you wish you could change? What and why?
- Is there a valued possession in your family that has been passed down through the generations?

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS AND CHANCES FOR ADVICE OR OPINIONS!

- What inventions have been developed in your lifetime? Did you invent anything?
- To which political party/ies have you belonged?
- What are some of the best books you have ever read?
- What do you value most in a friend?
- What values do you hold dear?
- What is your best advice for your descendents?
When you view the world today, what do you like/dislike?
What would you like to change?
What do you consider to be the biggest advances made in your lifetime?
- What do you consider to be the biggest setbacks made in your lifetime?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges today?
- Is there anything else you want me to know about your life that I have not known/thought to ask you?

BE SURE TO THANK THE PERSON YOU INTERVIEW FOR GIVING YOU ALL THE TIME IT TOOK TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS! A BIG HUG AND KISS WOULD BE A NICE BONUS 😊