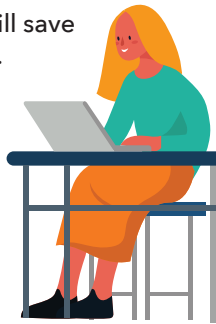




**Think outside the box when deciding who to interview. All perspectives are important to the historical record, and you never know what stories people have to tell!**

### CHOOSING YOUR PLATFORM

- ❖ Consider the equipment you have at hand: how strong is your internet connection? Is your computer reliable enough to handle an hour(s)-long interview?
  - The longer the interview = the more storage space you need.
  - Estimate **1GB** of storage per 1 hour of audio and **30GB** per hour of video.
- ❖ If you aren't sure, prioritize audio quality over video.
- ❖ Research what format your file will save in before deciding on a platform.
  - Be sure the file type is commonly used and not proprietary. If you have never heard of the file type, or it requires a particular program to open it (such as .wmv, Windows Media Player files), choose a different platform.
- ❖ **Video interviews** require a strong internet connection and reliable computer.
  - Video files are best saved in the **.MOV** or **.AVI** format. MP4s are acceptable and widely used by video conferencing programs (including Zoom).
- ❖ **Audio-only interviews** can be done with a smartphone app or a call-recording service.
  - Audio files are best saved in the **.WAV** format. Read about why: *Why WAV files?*
  - Should you do an audio-only recording with Zoom? You can, but it is not advisable. Zoom saves audio files as **.m4a** format. M4a is better than mp3, but many audio recorders offer WAV files, which is superior to both.
  - Mp3 is a highly compressed format that will downgrade the quality of your audio when saved. Avoid these if possible, or take extra care to transcribe/preserve them.



### HELPFUL RESOURCES

- For a detailed list of file formats and their preservability, see the Florida Digital Archive's **Recommended Data Formats for Preservation Purposes**.
- **Zoom Recording Tips** 
- **How to Record an Interview with Zoom**
- **Quick Guide to Oral History Recording Apps**
- **How to Record Calls on Your Android phone**
- **How to Record Calls on Your iPhone**


### DO A "TEST RUN"

- ❖ Practice with the technology together. Adjust your mic and screen settings as needed.
- ❖ Record your test run (with their permission) so you'll know how and where the file saves, how much space it takes up, how it sounds upon playback, etc.
- ❖ Invest in a microphone and/or headphones, if necessary.
  - Guide to **current best-seller headphones** with built-in mics.
  - Guide to **current best headsets for video chatting and conference calls**.
- ❖ Plan ahead to have a quiet space with few interruptions on the interview day.
- ❖ Interview only one person at a time to get the highest quality audio possible.
- ❖ Use this time to explain to your interviewee what you'd like to gain from the interview, how you are going to ask your questions, and the paperwork you will need signed.



- ❖ This is also an opportunity for your interviewee to tell you if there is anything they do not want to discuss or would like to focus on, which will inform the questions you prepare.

## THE PAPERWORK

- ❖ Before conducting any type of oral history interview, you *must* have them sign a form that outlines the terms between you and them, the interviewer and the interviewee.
- 
- ❖ This form will clarify the ownership of the interview and recording and enable you to use it in your own work, and then to donate it to an archive or other repository.
  - ❖ There are 3 main parts to include in your form:
    - 1. INTERVIEW AGREEMENT:** "I, [interviewee], agree to be interviewed and recorded by [interviewer] on [insert date]."
    - 2. COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:** "Upon completion of this interview, I hereby grant to [interviewer] the perpetual rights of use, reproduction, distribution, derivative works, performance, and display of this work for educational and research purposes."
    - 3. STATEMENT OF FUTURE USE:** "I give permission for the recording to be deposited in an archive or repository and to be made publicly available without restrictions on its use."
  - ❖ Common restrictions include not wanting the interview to be made publicly available until a certain date or until after their death, or not wanting it to be available online.
  - ❖ Keep in mind that archives prefer donations without restrictions.
  - ❖ Both participants sign and date the form; give your interviewee a copy, and store it in a safe place.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

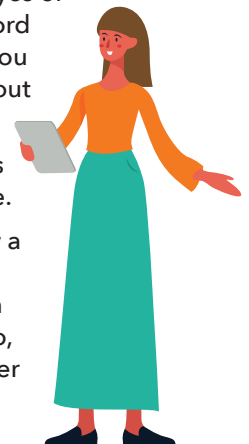
- California State Library guide on **Oral Histories and Copyright**, has some California-specific laws but a good general overview of copyright/ownership concerns.
- John A. Neuenschwander's **Oral History and the Law** is a seminal work (albeit a bit dated) on the basic legal and ethical considerations of conducting oral histories.
- If you are in possession of oral histories but do not have the proper paperwork, it can be difficult to determine what you can do with the recordings. A group of archivists in Kentucky put together this **Pathways to Oral History Access** guide to help you determine the possibilities and limitations of oral histories that do not have clear origins.

## PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

- ❖ Define your purpose and scope. Ask yourself "What do I want to know?" You can focus on a particular time period or aspect of their lives, or do it free form and see where the conversation leads—it's up to you!
- ❖ Prepare about 10 questions. You will think of more as the interview goes on and you may not ask all of them, but you will feel more prepared and won't forget to ask the most important ones. Check out our **Interview an Elder** guide for ideas of questions to ask.
- ❖ Start with basic questions to warm them up, then advance to more in-depth questions.

## CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

- ❖ Ask open ended questions, not "yes or no" or ones that require a one-word answer. Instead of "where were you born?" ask "could you tell me about where you were born?"
- ❖ Try not to ask "leading" questions that might influence the response.
- ❖ Be flexible and don't try to follow a script - it won't work! Let the interviewer lead the conversation and tell their story as they want to, but don't be afraid to politely steer them back with questions if they veer too far off topic.



- ❖ Embrace silence. Don't feel rushed to ask another question right away; give your interviewee time to reflect and they will often find a natural segue into another topic.
- ❖ Resist the urge to interrupt with affirmations like "oh, that's interesting!" Voices are easily muffled on recordings and you don't want to accidentally disrupt their train of thought.
- ❖ Respect the interviewee's need to take a break, or if they decline to answer a question. Arrange to do a 2nd interview if necessary and you are both on board.
- ❖ Enjoy the moment and your role in it!

## SAVE SAVE SAVE

- ❖ Remember **LOCKSS**—Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe
- ❖ Store your recorded interviews in multiple locations, if possible: in the cloud, on an external drive, or on a friend's computer.
- ❖ Transcribe the interviews, if you can.
  - There are many resources for automatic transcription (YouTube, for example). None are better than human transcription, but will do most of the heavy lifting that you can then correct. Most conferencing platforms, like Zoom, have a feature that will automatically caption your videos. See **Zoom's caption guide**.
- ❖ Send the transcript to your interviewee to ensure they are comfortable with the interview; this lets them know you value their input and helps ensure they are on board with the final product.
- ❖ Archivists love transcripts! Transcripts make your interview more accessible and shareable.



## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ❖ Refer to the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's **Levels of Digital Preservation** for an in-depth look into how to keep your digital files, including your oral history interviews, safely preserved for the long term.
- ❖ The Library of Congress **Digital Preservation** sector is a leading source of information.
- ❖ **TEMI** is a paid transcription service used by many journalists, but there are many, many more!
- ❖ Many organizations like the **Oral History Association** and the **Southwest Oral History Association** put out helpful, up-to-date resources.

Contact the Arizona Historical Society Library & Archives at [ahsreference@azhs.gov](mailto:ahsreference@azhs.gov) with any questions and concerns.