

Interview Questions

Choose from the following questions to help you get started with your interview. If your interviewee answers questions that go beyond the questions listed below, that is okay.

1. What is your name and where were you born?
2. When did you come to the United States? Where did your family settle? What was life like when you first came to America? Why did you relocate or move to where you are now?
3. What are your hopes, goals, and dreams for your children/grandchildren in America?
4. Please provide any primary or secondary sources you have (e.g., photos, letters, diaries, journals, etc.)
5. Share one lesson you learned from your experience or advice to help young people understand and appreciate the importance of their ancestor's experiences and stories.

Questions specific for Vietnamese refugees:

6. How old were you during the Vietnam War and what was your occupation?
7. What was your life like during the Vietnam War? How did you feel about the war at the time?
8. In what ways were you affected by the Vietnam War?
9. What specific event do you remember about the Vietnam War?
10. Did you or your family have to travel by boat? If so, what was that like?
11. Did you live in the refugee camp? If so, describe your experience there.
12. Share one lesson you learned from your experience or an advice to help young people understand and appreciate the importance of Vietnamese refugees and the culture.

How to Conduct an Interview

Remember to approach the interview with respect, empathy, and a genuine interest in learning from the experiences of others.

Step 1: Choose Your Interviewee

Select a family member, relative, or community member whose stories you want to capture. It could be a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, or someone else with interesting experiences.

Step 2: Prepare Your Questions

Create a list of questions to ask during the interview. Questions can cover a range of topics, such as childhood memories, significant life events, cultural traditions, and more. Make sure your questions are open-ended to encourage detailed responses.

Step 3: Set Up Your Recording Device

If possible, use a recording device such as a smartphone, tablet, or audio recorder to capture the interview. Make sure it's fully charged and has enough storage space. If using a video camera, ensure that you have proper lighting.

Step 4: Choose a Comfortable Setting

Find a quiet and comfortable place for the interview where both you and the interviewee can relax and talk openly. Avoid noisy or distracting environments.

Step 5: Start with a Warm-Up

Begin the interview with some light and easy questions to help the interviewee feel comfortable. This could include asking about their favorite childhood games, hobbies, or memorable events.

Step 6: Ask Your Questions

Progress through your list of questions, being a good listener and allowing the interviewee to share their stories. Don't rush, and give them time to reflect on each question before responding.

Step 7: Capture Details

Encourage the interviewee to share specific details, such as names, places, and dates. These details will add richness and authenticity to the oral history.

Step 8: Be Flexible

Be open to the conversation taking unexpected turns. Some of the most interesting stories may emerge when you allow the interviewee to share freely.

Step 9: Express Gratitude

Thank the interviewee for sharing their stories. Let them know that their memories are valuable and appreciated.

Step 10: Save and Store the Recording

If using a recording device, save the interview file and consider making a backup copy. This ensures that you have the information for your oral history project and you can revisit it when needed to create your project.