

Relative Interview Question Set

A guided booklet for capturing a relative's life story in their own words

What This Booklet Is For

Every family has stories that only live in one person's memory. This booklet gives you 48 questions across 8 themes, from childhood through the wisdom they'd pass on, plus room to write down what you learn. Use it for one long conversation or spread it across several visits.

How To Use This Booklet

1. Fill in the Interview Details page before you start, and ask permission before recording audio or video.
2. Pick one or two categories per sitting rather than all eight at once. Thirty to forty-five minutes is usually enough before either of you gets tired.
3. Ask the printed question, then let the answer wander. The best material usually comes from a follow-up you didn't plan, not the next question on the page.
4. Write a short summary in the space provided, even if you're also recording. Memory of the conversation fades faster than you'd expect.

Before You Begin

- Ask first, even with close family. "Would you be up for me recording our conversation?" is enough.
- Bring a photo or two, or a copy of what you have of the family tree so far. It jogs memory faster than a bare question does.
- Start with an easy, low-stakes category (Childhood or School Days work well) before moving into heavier ones.

Good To Know

- Skipping a question is always fine. Some memories are private, or simply gone, and that's a valid answer too.
- You don't need every question answered in one sitting. A short, relaxed visit beats a long one nobody enjoyed.
- If a relative has memory difficulties, focus on feelings and sensory details over exact dates. They tend to hold on longer.

Inside This Booklet

- | | |
|---|--|
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #4a7ebb; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 1. Childhood & Family Home
 <i>Their earliest years, home, and everyday childhood life</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #708050; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 3. School Days & Friends
 <i>Growing up outside the house, and the people who shaped that time</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #d4b030; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 5. Work & Daily Life
 <i>How they spent their days and what the work meant to them</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #804040; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 7. Traditions & Heritage
 <i>What was passed down, and what they hope keeps going</i> </div> </div> | <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #c05030; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 2. Parents & Grandparents
 <i>The people who raised them, and the ones before that</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #904070; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 4. Love & Marriage
 <i>How their own family began</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #207080; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 6. Historic Events & Community
 <i>The wider world they lived through, and the place they called home</i> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: #c05030; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div> 8. Reflections & Wisdom
 <i>The bigger picture, in their own words</i> </div> </div> |
|---|--|

Interview Details

One of these per person, or per sitting if you spread the interview out

INTERVIEWEE'S FULL NAME

RELATIONSHIP TO YOU

MAIDEN NAME (IF APPLICABLE)

DATE OF BIRTH

BIRTHPLACE

INTERVIEW DATE

LOCATION

INTERVIEWER (YOUR NAME)

THEIR PLACE IN THE FAMILY TREE

FORMAT USED

☐

Audio Recording

☐

Video Recording

☐

Written Notes Only

☐

Video Call

CONSENT

☐

They gave permission to record this conversation and share it with family.

Why This Conversation Matters To You

Childhood & Family Home

Their earliest years, home, and everyday childhood life

1. Where were you born, and what do you know about that day?

2. What was your childhood home like? Who lived there with you?

3. What is one of your earliest clear memories?

4. What games, toys, or shows did you love most as a kid?

5. Did you have a nickname growing up? Where did it come from?

6. What chores or responsibilities did you have at home?

Parents & Grandparents

The people who raised them, and the ones before that

1. What were your parents like when you were young?

2. What is something your mother or father always used to say?

3. What do you remember about your grandparents?

4. Are there family stories about relatives you never met?

5. What is the best piece of advice a parent or grandparent gave you?

6. Did your family ever talk about where the family originally came from?

School Days & Friends

Growing up outside the house, and the people who shaped that time

1. What was your school like, and what was your favorite subject?

2. Who was your best friend growing up, and how did you meet?

3. Did you ever get into trouble at school? What happened?

4. What did people your age do for fun back then?

5. Was there a teacher or mentor who made a lasting impression on you?

6. What did you want to be when you grew up?

Love & Marriage

How their own family began

1. How did you meet your spouse or partner?

2. What do you remember about your first date together?

3. How did you know they were the one?

4. Tell me about your wedding day.

5. What has helped you stay close over the years?

6. What advice would you give someone about love or marriage?

Work & Daily Life

How they spent their days and what the work meant to them

1. What was your first job, and what did it pay?

2. What was a typical work day like for you?

3. What job or accomplishment are you most proud of?

4. Did you ever change careers? What led to that?

5. How did you usually spend an evening or a weekend?

6. What has work taught you about life?

Historic Events & Community

The wider world they lived through, and the place they called home

1. What is the first major event in the news that you remember living through?

2. Where were you, and what do you remember, during a moment that changed the country?

3. How did your town or neighborhood change over the years?

4. Did you or anyone close to you serve in the military? What was that like?

5. What new invention or technology changed your life the most?

6. What do you wish younger generations understood about your era?

Traditions & Heritage

What was passed down, and what they hope keeps going

1. What holiday or family tradition do you remember most fondly?

2. Are there any recipes or dishes that have been passed down in the family?

3. What language, or languages, were spoken in your home growing up?

4. Do you know why our family has the last name we do, or any story behind it?

5. Is there an heirloom, photo, or object in the family with a story attached to it?

6. What traditions do you hope stay alive in the family after you?

Reflections & Wisdom

The bigger picture, in their own words

1. What are you most proud of in your life?

2. What has been the happiest period of your life? The hardest?

3. What is the best advice you've ever received?

4. Is there anything you've always wanted to tell the family but haven't?

5. What do you want future generations to know about you?

6. If you could give one piece of advice to your grandchildren, what would it be?

Follow-Up & Session Log

For names, dates, and threads worth chasing down next time

Questions To Ask Next Time

Names, Dates & Places To Verify

Session Log

DATE	TOPICS COVERED	FOLLOW-UP NEEDED?