

People might think that the most important part of doing an oral history is asking "good" questions, or making sure your recording is clear. But really, the most important thing is LISTENING to the narrator. When people know you're listening to them, they feel seen and cared for. It helps build relationships. And, that is a super powerful thing.



Oral histories are cool, because they remind us that everyone has an interesting story to tell, and that everyone's lives are really important.



HIStory is really **OUR**story.

Doing oral histories helps more people learn about the contributions that everyday people have made to our families, our cultures, and the way we think and do things.

How do you do an oral history??

Pick someone you want to know more about. Elders ("old" people) usually make good narrators, but anyone in your family, a neighbor, artists, business owners, your doctor, librarian... It could be anyone!

Ask that person if you can interview them, and tell them why you were interested in them. Also, if you want to record the interview and share it later, make sure you ask their permission.

Write about what you want to know about your narrator. You might want to learn about: where and when they were born; what life was like when they were your age; what their community was / is like; what kinds of traditions they have / had in their family or community; what kinds of things they did / do with their time (careers, hobbies, activism, etc.)



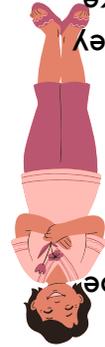
What is an oral history??

An oral history is a story of someone's life that they tell out loud. It's usually a conversation between two people that is recorded. The person who is telling their own story is called the **narrator**. The person who asks the narrator questions is called the **interviewer**.



Think about what you want to know about your narrator. Write about 10 questions you can ask. They should be "open ended" questions, instead of "yes / no" questions.

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a kid's guide to

Oral our history

When it's time for the interview, start recording, and begin with just chatting a bit. Then you can start asking your questions. Don't feel like you have to stick to what's on paper. If they say something interesting and you want to know more, ask a follow up question. That gets lots of good details out. Remember, the goal is to be present and listen. When it feels like time to stop (maybe after 30 minutes or an hour), stop recording and thank your narrator for sharing some of their story with you. Now, think about how you want to share it.



It's impossible to fit everything about oral histories into this zine. The good news is, there are lots more resources online to learn the details of how to do oral histories. There are also a ton of really interesting oral histories to listen to for inspiration.

Vist ourarchives.org to find links to a few sites.

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