

## CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

**Tip 1:** Before going to the interview, double check that you have everything you will need.

- Interview questions
- Tape recorder or video camera, power cord and extra batteries
- Microphone and microphone cord
- Cassette tapes or mini-DV tapes
- *Interview Consent Form*
- Paper and pen
- Extension cord
- Camera

**Tip 2:** When you meet the person you will be interviewing, introduce yourself and thank the person for agreeing to do the interview. Ask him/her to sign the Interview Consent Form.

**Tip 3:** When you are ready to start the interview, **MAKE SURE THE TAPE RECORDER IS TURNED ON AND THE TAPE IS RUNNING!** It is a good idea to check all aspects of the tape recording by doing a sample run and a playback to check for volume.

**Tip 4:** Start the interview by saying, "Today is   (date)  , and I am talking with   (person's name)   about   (subject)  ."

**Tip 5:** Begin with background questions such as name, age, and place of birth. These will provide valuable information, but it will also help the interviewee get comfortable with the process.

**Tip 6:** Next, begin to ask some of the open-ended questions that you prepared for the interview. If the person is an eyewitness to history, ask him/her to tell his/her story.

**Tip 7:** Take your time and get a detailed response. Keep in mind that when you are interviewing it's better to get a complete response to a question than to rush through all of the questions. Some helpful phrases to use for follow-up questions are:

"Can you tell me more about. . . ?"

"Could you give me an example of. . . ?"

"Why did you. . .?" or "Why was that. . .?"

**Tip 8:** **Listen carefully while the person is answering.** You may need to change the order of your questions or eliminate questions depending on what the person says. **Be flexible.** You may learn about some things

you had not anticipated, but new ideas and perspectives can be valuable in your research.

**Tip 9:** If the person gets too far off the topic, try to refocus by asking one of the questions you have prepared, or say something like, “That is really interesting. I’d like to go back to. . .”

**Tip 10:** Be respectful and polite at all times during the interview, and be sensitive to the person whom you are interviewing. It is not appropriate to disagree with the person you are interviewing.

**Tip 11:** Ask about additional materials or artifacts such as photographs, scrapbooks, clippings, letters or diaries that the interviewee might be willing to share with you for your History Day project. (This is where a camera can come in handy.)

**Tip 12:** The interview should last about 45-60 minutes. If the person you are interviewing appears to be getting tired, you should ask if they would like to stop. You may be able to arrange a follow-up interview if you need more information.

## **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

- If you haven’t already done so, label the interview tape with the person’s name, your name, and the date. Choose a safe place to keep it.
- Make sure that you have the signed Interview Consent Form.
- Write down a few notes for yourself about the interview:
  - How did the interview go?
  - How did the person respond to the questions?
  - Did you get enough information?
  - Do you need a second interview with the person or an interview with someone else?
- Send a thank-you note to the person you interviewed. Tell her/him that you appreciated the time spent with you, and mention something that the person told you that was especially interesting or valuable to your research.
- Check the reliability of the information you got from the interview by comparing it to information you have gathered from other sources. An interview is ONE good source of evidence about your topic, but not the only piece of evidence.