

INTERVIEWING QUICK REFERENCE

DO

- Put the narrator at ease: Try to seem at ease yourself.
- Begin with conversation: introduce yourself, talk about the project, etc.
- Begin by asking easy, factual questions (name, place of birth, etc.).
- Maintain eye contact with the narrator
- Nod and smile in agreement
- Show appreciation for the narrator's help
- Listen carefully
- Ask the speaker to recount stories, and strive to learn specific information
- If a statement is unclear, ask for clarification after the narrator has finished speaking
- Try to slow down a narrator who talks too fast, gently and tactfully
- Explain reasons for changes in topic (transition to a new topic thoughtfully)
- Ask probing questions when sensing that the narrator is hesitant to talk
- Ask follow-up questions when necessary
- Try to have the narrator talk in specifics, rather than generalities
- Honor pauses and silence, and give the narrator an opportunity to continue
- Discreetly check several times during the interview to make sure the recorder is running

DO NOT

- Ask "yes/no" questions, as they limit responses
- Ask leading questions (Did that make you mad?). Instead, ask open-ended questions (How did that make you feel?).
- Ask more than one question at a time
- Hurry the narrator
- Repeat or summarize what the narrator has just said
- Interrupt the narrator
- Complete the narrator's thoughts/sentences
- Summarize or restate the narrator's statements after they have finished speaking.
- Talk over the narrator's voice
- Make distracting noises with rattling papers, shifting chairs, etc.
- Talk at length about yourself or your own experiences
- Make irrelevant or distracting comments
- Nervously fill silence

How to deal with problem narrators

- For those that are nervous, or don't want to talk because they believe they have nothing valuable to contribute, you have to convince them otherwise. Talk with them, and stress that their opinions and experiences are valuable to your research.
- Another problem narrator is the one that talks too much off-topic. Try to use the natural breaks in conversation to redirect questions. Interrupt only as a last resort.