

Episode 19: I Want to Interview a Living Relative

5 Minute Challenge—Choose a living relative, and set up an appointment!

Steps:

1. Review the genealogical information you have and the information you need:

Decide what information you need and what you'd like to learn about your family.

2. Select a relative who you think can provide the information you need:

Ask relatives who might be the best resource to learn the things you want to learn.

3. Call, e-mail, or write a letter to set up the interview:

Prepare your relative. Explain what you are doing and why.



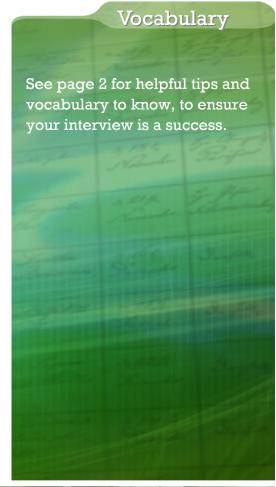
Let the person know what you want to learn from him or her.

Helpful hints:

Prepare for the interview!

Know what you want to learn. Send a copy of your questions to your relative in advance so that he or she can feel comfortable and ready.

Enjoy the experience! Help it be a great experience for both you and your living relative.







Tips for Conducting an Interview with a Relative

Once you've made an appointment to interview a relative, you've completed the challenge. Congratulations! Now here are some suggestions for conducting the interview:

Send a follow-up letter:

This gives your relative some time to find papers or to think about what he or she can remember. Include in the letter:

- Date, time, and place of the interview.
- Things you would like to learn and some questions you will ask. (See below.)
- Documents, photos, heirlooms, etc. that you would like your relative to find ahead of time.

Write down the questions you want to ask:

Here are some suggestions:

- 1. What is your full name? When and where were you born? Who did you marry?
- 2. What memories can you share about your father? Mother? Siblings?
- 2. Do you have photos of your family members that we could look at?
- 3. Who is your father? Mother? Brothers? Sisters? When and where were they born? Married?
- 4. Will you show me some of your old family documents or artifacts? Do you have things like family Bibles that might have names and birth dates in them?
- 5. Is or was anyone in the family interested in family history? Do you have any genealogical forms (family trees, pedigree charts, family group records) about your family?

Prepare in advance:

Gather and organize materials before your visit:

- Blank genealogy forms to record information.
- Genealogy information that you have, such as family trees, family group records, and photographs. You can share this information and ask if it is correct.
- Pencil and paper, a tape recorder, a camera, or a video to record the interview.

During the interview:

- Ask your relative to review any genealogy information you have for accuracy and to identify people in photos you brought with you. Ask for names, dates, and places.
- Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a "Yes" or "No."
- Ask open ended questions that begin with "What can you tell me about..?" "What memories do you have..?" etc.
- Give the person time to think and respond at his or her own pace.
- Ask about family records, certificates, photographs, or other artifacts.
- Ask for permission to make copies of records or take snapshots of them.
- Before leaving, ask for the names of other relatives you should interview next.

After the interview:

- Update your records with any new information you gathered from the interview.
- Make a transcript or report of your interview. Ask your relative to review it for accuracy.
- Ask for permission to copy the report and distribute it to family members.
- Contact other relatives you learned about, and set up more interviews.