

Some Sample Oral Interview Questions

1. When and where were you born? What is your nationality? Have you changed citizenship during your lifetime? If so, what were your reasons for making that change?
2. Describe the family in which you lived as a child. What did your parents do for a living? How many brothers and sisters did you have? Did you live with, or near, members of your extended family? Who?
3. Where were your parents originally from? Where did they live during their lifetimes? Why did they move from one place to another?
4. When did you or your family come to the United States? What reasons did earlier generations of your family have for leaving their country of origin?
5. Describe the town(s) or city (cities) where you lived as a child. Which place of residence was your favorite? Why? What was your house like?
6. Briefly describe various homes you have lived in at different times in your life. What type(s) of dwelling(s) did you and your family occupy?
7. What is your native language? What other languages do you speak fluently? What languages were spoken by other members of your family?
8. Describe your educational background. Where did you go to school? What did you study? What were your favorite subjects in school? What were your least favorite subjects and why? Describe your favorite teacher(s).
9. Who were and are your close friends? Do you still keep in touch with them? What were the things you and your friends did together? What were the things you and your friends had in common?
10. Describe your religious background. Where did you and your family attend church or temple? Did you or your family change religious practices? Why?
11. What cultural traditions did you practice when you were young? What traditions did you practice later in life? For example, what holidays did you celebrate?

12. How were children supposed to act towards adults? How were men supposed to act with women, and vice-versa?

13. Tell me about your spouse(s). How and where did you meet? What things did you enjoy doing together? If you divorced, please explain why?

14. Describe your employment history. What jobs have you held? Who did you work for? What are some favorite memories of your professional career? Describe your spouse's employment history.

15. Describe prejudice or discrimination you experienced or witnessed, in school or at work. What was the basis of this discrimination?

16. Describe yours and/or your spouse's military service. When and where did you serve? Which branch of military service? What effects did this military experience have on your life?

17. Describe yours and/or your spouse's hobbies, leisure activities and recreational pursuits? What games did you play? What is/was your favorite activity, and why? What were your favorite forms of entertainment?

18. What special talents do you have (art, music, athletic prowess)?

19. What is the best thing that has happened to you during your lifetime? What is the worst thing that has happened to you during your lifetime? Did you have dreams of doing things that you were not able to do? What and why?

20. Describe any natural disasters you have experienced: fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes. How did these events effect you and your family?

21. Describe serious illnesses you or other family members have suffered. Discuss injuries and hospitalizations you have endured. How were you injured?

22. Describe what you remember about any particular historic events you have lived through, for example: Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when Pearl Harbor was attacked? When President Kennedy was assassinated, etc.?

23. Have you ever been arrested or gone to court? What were the circumstances of these events?

24. Describe some of your favorite memories: the day you graduated, your wedding day, the birth of your first child, etc. What is the highlight of your life? What is your most memorable event?

25. What is your earliest memory? About how old were you? (It can be a story, a scene, a smell, or ?)

26. What are the legends, scandals, family jokes, slogans, favorite songs, that have been passed down in your family? Who first told you these stories?

27. Tell me a story about . . . is there a tale that has been passed down through the generations in your family?

28. What honors and awards have you earned? What were the circumstances that led to your receiving these awards?

29. What personal achievement are you most proud of? What would you like people to remember about you?