Activity: Formulating Effective Questions for Your Oral History Interview

In this section of the AVBarn Website, you found information about formulating questions. Examples were given of good questions and faulty questions. In this activity, you will be able to identify and formulate different types of questions.

Question Type Number One: Recognizing an **open-ended** question that will allow your interviewee to elaborate on an answer:
Which ones of these questions will probably yield the most information?
    1. Where do you live?
    2. Will you describe the place where you live?
    3. Do you like your job?
    4. What is your job?
    5. What things do you like and dislike about your job?
    6. Do you like vegetables?
    7. What kinds of vegetables do you like?
    8. When did you become a pilot?
    9. What was it like when you first became a pilot?

Write three open-ended questions about a topic of your choice:
    1.
    2.
    3.

Question Type Number Two: Recognizing (and avoiding) **leading** questions that may distort the interviewee's answers.
        Examples: You don't like dogs, do you?
                        So, you quit college because of lack of funds?
                        That was a wonderful experience, wasn't it?
These questions assume that the interviewee will agree with you (and your bias), or that you already know the answer. It may intimidate the interviewee from expressing his /her real opinion or situation. You can recognize some leading questions by their tag endings.

Spot the leading questions among the questions below. Then change them to not be neutral.
    1. What is your opinion about these business rules?
    2. The Mercedes is the best car, isn't it?
    3. That situation must have been very difficult, wasn't it?
    4. Have you ever tried playing tennis?
    5. Where did you find that ugly car?
    6. How did you start your business?
    7. Don't you prefer hamburgers to chicken?

Write three non-leading questions about a topic:
    1.
    2.
    3.