

Activity: Researching the Oral History Interviewee

After you have identified the person you are going to interview, it is advisable to research them ahead of time. You have also decided what type of interview (subject matter) you are going to do – life history, career, special subject.



- List the interviewee's main characteristics – name, age, residence, job description, interests – that you can find out from them in setting up your interview.
- Do a Google® search of their name. Add to your list the facts you find from the search if they are relevant. It might spark some possible questions. Bookmark your finds.
- If you have the job-type identification or special interest identification, search online for background material on that subject. The AVBarn interviews were about agriculture, but each farmer or worker specialized in a type of farming, farm business, or crop.
 - The interviewer researched elk farming on the Internet, for example, to be able to ask intelligent questions about elk during the interview and to be able to understand the interviewee's answers.
 - Take notes you can use to compose your questions.
 - Bookmark the sites you find.
- If the topic of the interview includes historical information, such as farming during the Great Depression, find out what happened to farmers and others during that time.
 - You will be able to ask the interviewee if certain things happened in his or her life, too.
 - Becoming familiar with another time or place helps you understand what the interviewee has to say.
 - It will also make your questions clearer to your audience.
- Read over your research notes.
- Mark them by topic.
- Write some questions for each topic.
- Rearrange your questions into a logical order.
- Check and edit your questions for duplications, omissions, and accuracy.