

What to ask during your family interview:
45 questions to get you started!

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The first step towards a successful family interview is to create a list of good questions. By "good" I mean questions that prompt your subject to relate the family facts and stories you want to preserve for generations to come. Of course, not all of us are born interviewers and you may find the prospect of writing a list of questions a bit daunting.

Don't be afraid. You can do it. This article will help.

Quite often the hardest part of composing a list of interview questions is writing the first one. Once you have the first one written, it usually spurs a second, the second leads you to the third, and so on. Of course, there may be times when you come to an end of a line of questions and get stuck, wondering what to ask next.

The forty-five questions below are designed to help you with both these challenges. Don't know what question or questions to ask first? Stuck in the middle of drafting your list? Below you'll see a wide variety of general questions that will stimulate your creative juices and help you conquer or avoid "interview writer's block."

Use the questions just as they are or alter them to suit your subject. With any luck, the list will also help you think of new questions to ask. And don't feel you have to use them all -this list is meant only as a guide and to stimulate your creativity. Use what works and discard what doesn't.

Have fun composing your interview questions! Please let me know if this article was helpful. You can contact me at steve@familylegacyvideo.com.

And now, here are those sample questions I promised you!

Sample Family Legacy Video® Questions

- 1) Please tell me your full name.
- 2) For whom were you named?
- 3) Tell me about your maternal grandparents -
 - a. Where did they come from?
 - b. How did they meet?
 - c. What did they look like?
 - d. What were their personalities like?
 - e. What kind of education did they have?
 - f. What kind of work did they do?
 - g. Where did they live?
 - h. Do you have any special memories of them?

- 4) Tell me about your paternal grandparents -
 - a. Where did they come from?
 - b. How did they meet?
 - c. What did they look like?
 - d. What were their personalities like?
 - e. What kind of education did they have?
 - f. What kind of work did they do?
 - g. Where did they live?
 - h. Do you have any special memories of them?
- 5) What can you tell me about your great-grandparents?
- 6) Tell me about your mother and father -
 - a. Where did they come from?
 - b. How did they meet?
 - c. What did they look like?
 - d. Describe their personalities.
 - e. How did they relate to each other?
 - f. What kind of work did they do?
 - g. What was you dad like as a dad?
 - h. What was your mom like as a mom?
 - i. Describe your relationship with your mother and father.
 - j. Do you have any special memories of them?
- 7) Tell me about your aunts and uncles.
 - a. What did they look like?
 - b. Describe their personalities.
 - c. What kind of work did they do?
 - d. Describe your relationships with them.
 - e. Do you have any special memories of them?
- 8) Tell me about your brothers and sisters -
 - a. Were you the eldest? The baby? Where did you fit in?
 - b. Going from eldest to youngest, tell us the names of your brothers and sisters.
 - c. What was each of them like?
 - d. How did you relate to each other while growing up?
 - e. What favorite childhood activities did you share?
 - f. Did you have special chores?
 - g. Describe your relationships as adults.
 - i. Close as ever?
 - ii. Closer?
 - iii. Distant?
 - h. How do you feel about your brothers and sisters?
- 9) What are your earliest memories?
- 10) Where and when were you born?
- 11) Describe the place or places where you grew up.
- 12) What were your houses/apartments like?
- 13) Tell me about your neighbors. Do any of them stand out? Why?
- 14) Were there any other children in your neighborhood?
 - a. Did you get along?
 - b. What kinds of games did you play?
 - c. Did you enjoy any other activities?
- 15) Do you have any special childhood memories of your neighborhood?
- 16) Tell me about your pet or pets.

- 17) Who did the cooking in your family?
 - a. Was he or she a good cook?
 - b. Do any memorable meals (good or bad) stand out?
 - c. Describe the kitchen of your childhood.
 - d. How did meal preparation back then differ from today?
- 18) How were other chores, like cleaning and doing wash, different from today?
- 19) What did your family do for fun?
 - a. Did you read?
 - b. Play games?
 - c. Watch movies?
 - i. What did a ticket cost?
 - ii. What was the experience like?
 - iii. Who were your favorite movie stars?
 - iv. What films did you enjoy?
 - d. Listen to the radio?
 - i. Describe the family radio.
 - ii. What were your favorite shows?
 - iii. How do you think radio compares to television today?
 - iv. Any memorable news you heard first over the radio?
- 20) Did your family go on vacations?
 - a. Where?
 - b. Do you have any special vacation memories?
- 21) Who was your best friend?
 - a. How did you meet?
 - b. What kinds of things did you do?
 - c. What made him/her so special?
 - d. Are you still in touch today?
- 22) Tell us about your school days.
 - a. What schools did you attend?
 - b. Did you have any favorite teachers?
 - i. Who were they?
 - ii. What made them special?
 - c. What school activities did you enjoy?
 - d. Did you win any awards or contests?
 - e. Did you hold any school offices?
 - f. Did you ever get into trouble? How?
 - g. Who were your school chums?
 - i. What did you do during and after school?
 - ii. What became of them?
 - h. Have you attended school reunions? What were they like?
- 23) What activities outside of school were you involved in?
- 24) What was your favorite holiday (or holidays)?
 - a. Why was this holiday so special?
 - b. Describe the sights, smells and sounds associated with this holiday.
 - c. Describe the activities associated with this holiday.
 - d. Tell us about your favorite holiday food.
 - e. What was your favorite part of the day?

- 25) Tell me about your wife/husband.
- How and when did you meet?
 - Was it "love at first sight?"
 - How long was your courtship?
 - What quality especially endeared him/her to you?
 - Describe your wedding day from start to finish.
 - Where was the ceremony?
 - How many people attended?
 - What did you wear?
 - How did you feel when you said, "I do"?
 - Where did you hold the reception?
 - What kind of food was served?
 - What music was played?
 - What are your favorite memories of the day?
 - Where did you honeymoon?
 - Describe your favorite honeymoon memories.
- 26) Where did you live after your marriage?
- 27) Tell me about your children.
- How many did you have?
 - What their names and when were they born?
 - What were they like as children?
 - Describe any special memories associated with each.
 - Did you enjoy being a mother/father?
- 28) How does it feel to be a:
- Grandmother/grandfather?
 - Great-grandmother/great-grandfather?
- 29) What kinds of work did you do - as a child and adult?
- 30) What kinds of work did your spouse do?
- 31) Describe your military experiences.
- 32) What memories do you have of the following events:
- World War I
 - Great Depression
 - World War II
 - Korean War
 - Viet Nam
 - Kennedy assassination
 - World's Fairs
 - Space race and moon landing
 - (Other events)
- 33) What activities did you and your children enjoy?
- 34) Please tell me your favorite family stories and memories.
- 35) Describe your passions in life.
- People
 - Hobbies
 - Sports
 - Travel
 - Other activities, causes, organizations
- 36) What was the best thing that ever happened to you?
- What was the worst?
- 37) What was a difficult time in your life?
- 38) What helped you survive that time?

- 39) How did that experience help you become stronger?
- 40) What did you learn from that experience?
- 41) How have you made use of that learning in other situations?
- 42) What life lessons would you like to pass along to your grandchildren and great-grandchildren?
- 43) How has your life changed since you retired?
- 44) What are you looking forward to in the years to come?
- 45) Looking back, would you say you had a good life?
 - a. Why?