



HANDOUT: Family History Question Ideas

The Basics: Make sure you write the name and birth date of the person you're interviewing, as well as where they fit in your family tree. Then, choose any of the topics below and begin asking questions.

Childhood: What do you recall about your childhood? Where did you live and go to school? What do you remember best about your parents? What did you and your siblings do in your spare time? Were you an obedient child or a mischievous child? What styles of clothing did children wear then? What healthcare issues did you face (normal childhood diseases and accidents, or more serious)? What kinds of cures were used?

Family Traditions: Did your family have any special traditions, such as things that they did on holidays or birthdays? What about family heirlooms? Is there anything that has been handed down from generation to generation?

Education: Where did you attend grade school/high school? How did you get to school? Who were your teachers? Were there special events that you enjoyed? Can you describe those?

Growing Up: When did you leave home? Why did you leave and where did you go? How did your life change? Did you feel grown up? Were you a little scared?

Historical Events: Which significant historical events have taken place during your lifetime? Were there wars, natural disasters, or political changes? How did these events affect you?



Hometown: What was the name of the place where you grew up? Was it a big city or a small town? Were there any special activities or festivals at different times during the year?

Immigration: How old were you when you immigrated to the United States? Where did you come from and where and when did you arrive? How did you travel? By boat, plane, or train? How long did the trip take? What feelings did you have about coming to the United States? What was one of the biggest differences between the United States and your previous home?

Occupation: What did your parents do for a living when you were growing up? Did you ever help them out? Was your family financially comfortable? What was your first job? How old were you at the time? How did you get your job? What different jobs have you had during your life?

Physical Characteristics: What physical characteristics do people in your family share? Do they all have the same hair color or eye color? Who in the family do you resemble?

Previous Generations: Did you know your grandparents or great-grandparents? What were their names? Where did they live? What stories can you tell about them and their lives?

Religion: What part did religion play in your family? Were you very religious? Did you go to religious services on a regular basis?

Other possible topics: Education, politics, military service, recreation, entertainers of the era, family personalities, family pets, traveling, dating, clothing, family recipes, favorite songs or poems, family medical history, marriage and raising a family, and anything else that may be of interest to you and your family.