

How to gather senior life stories

1.	Prepare questions in advance.
2.	Inform the subject of the purpose of the interview, who will see it, and how it will be used.
3.	Set aside a quiet time and place free from interruptions.
4.	It's often useful to use a tape or digital recorder and transcribe the dictation.
5.	If you use a voice or video recorder; test thoroughly before starting.
6.	Listen attentively and gently.
7.	Ask questions for clarification if something isn't clear.
8.	Don't try to force the subject into something they are uncomfortable discussing.

Benefits of a life history capture:

- Frees individual to talk about things they may never have talked about before.
- May lead to reconciliation among family members
- Creates a legacy
- Builds bonds between generations
- Gets rid of emotional baggage
- Shown to alleviate symptoms of depression, dementia, anxiety; may improve memory and cognitive functioning
- The conversation may turn out to be one of the highlights of elder life