

Handout 33: 'Day of' Checklist

Session: *Preparing for the Interview*

I. Setting up the recorded interview:

- Before you leave home, make sure you have extra batteries or a charger for your equipment, and you have all your notes with the list of topics and guiding questions. Dress appropriately to put the narrator at ease.
- Arrive on time, **(re-)introduce** yourself, and chat a bit to the narrator to break the ice
- Then, begin setting up the equipment for the interview. Choose as quiet a spot as possible (away from clocks, refrigerators, kitchen noises, outside traffic). If the narrator seems uncomfortable or nervous about the recording equipment, take a few minutes to explain how things work.
- Put your phone on airplane mode and kindly ask the narrator to do the same. This is your time and place together and you want to ensure there are no interruptions.
- Make sure to do a **soundcheck** first and test the microphone. Record both your voices, play back the test recording, and adjust the microphone setting and/or recording settings as needed. *To avoid feedback, keep the speaker volume down all the way while recording.*
- Make sure to **place the recorder** in a way that allows you to see it to view recording levels and easily see the time count.

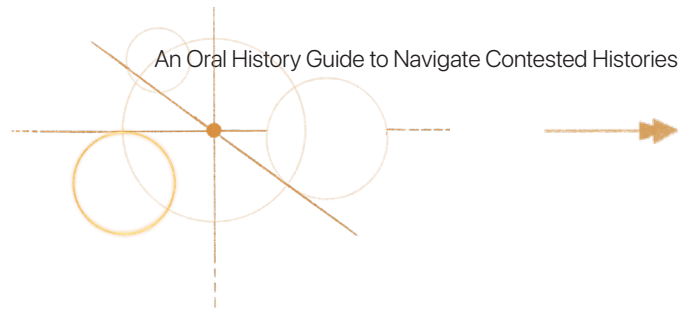
II. Starting the interview:

- Turn on the recorder and launch the interview with a general introduction that serves as an **audio label**. For example, start every interview with:
"This interview is for my civic engagement class at my school (name of school). This is [your name]. Today is [month/date/year]. I am interviewing [full name of the narrator]. This interview is taking place at [address; such as home of or office of] in [town, country]."
- Then, begin the interview by asking the narrator to introduce themselves, using their full name, date and place of birth, and parents' names.

III. Throughout the interview, practice active listening, which means you must:

- Provide feedback to your narrator with **silent encouragement**: Nod your head to show you are listening and smile when appropriate. Try to keep your feedback quiet, prevent the "ah-huh, walla, or helou" as much as possible from being recorded. And try to keep your feedback neutral, indicating





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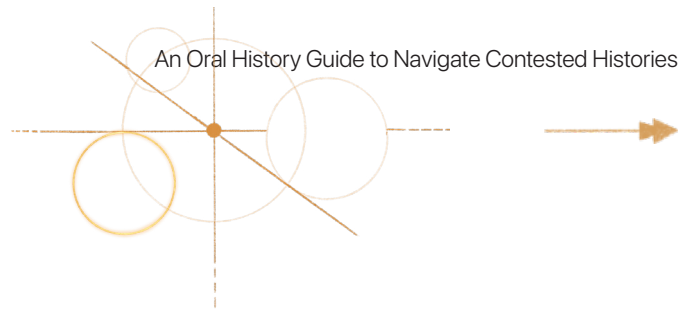
neither agreement nor disagreement. It is your job to guide the narrator, and your voice should be heard sparingly.

- Make sure to make and keep **eye contact** throughout the interview, **do not look at your hands, watch, or phone** while the narrator is talking. You must be completely focused on the narrator to show you are listening and are interested. This is the concept of **active listening**.
- Do not interrupt your narrator. If you have an immediate question, jot down a note to remind yourself of your question, other details you want them to cover, or spellings of certain names. If they interrupt you as you ask a follow-up question, then let them. You can always ask your question again.
- Don't hesitate to ask your narrator to repeat something you think may not have been recorded clearly because of an unexpected noise (cough, sneeze, telephone ring).
- Again, use the silence... If the narrator pauses, don't jump in immediately with another question. There may be a connection between thoughts, or maybe the narrator needs a few seconds to reconnect.
- Avoid "off the record" information or switching the recorder off and on during the interview.
- If there is a statement that you disagree with, don't react. **Remember this is their story, not yours.** You can challenge answers that are misleading, but do not argue about points of view. The only time argument is acceptable is when the recorder is turned off.
- Have water to drink at hand, but ask that coffee or tea be served either before or after the recording.
- Be aware of the narrator's comfort, age, and physical condition. If you sense they are tired, ask them, and if they are, stop the interview and resume at another sitting.

IV. Closing the interview:

- End the interview with a wrap-up question. Some possibilities include asking about changes from past to present or to consider future developments.
- Always end the interview with: "Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to add?"
- Always close with a heartfelt **thank you** and make sure to let them know how they can contact you and where they can hear the interview (Ideally, give them a copy for their own records).





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- Once the interview is finished, don't immediately turn off the recorder. You want to, firstly, show that you are not in a hurry, and, secondly, you never know when another story might pop up.
- Make sure to have your narrator sign the **consent form** if they haven't already.
- Before you leave, make sure to put things back that you may have moved, like chairs, tables, and knick-knacks, in the order that you found them.

