

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

This information is for extensive interviews. Choose the tips and questions that fit your needs and the goals and size of your end product.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

Before the interview

1. Find out about your interviewee
2. Prepare your list of questions
3. Prepare your interviewee. Explain to your interviewee who you are, why you want to do the interview, and what will happen to the information you collect from that person. If appropriate, give them a list of the questions.
4. Determine what method you want to use to record and test your equipment. With today's technology it is easy to video record the interview. For in-person interviews, you will need a recording device (camera or cell phone). Zoom interviews can also be done (they are probably the easiest) but are not as personal and may not be as productive as sitting face-to-face. Don't forget to press record!
You may want to recruit someone to help with the set up. Make sure your equipment is running smoothly prior to the interview.
5. Find a location that's conducive to producing a clear recording.

During the interview

1. At the start of the recording, **make a brief opening announcement** that specifies date and place of the interview, names of the interviewer and interviewee, and the general topic of the interview.
2. Encourage your interviewee by paying attention. Keep any time spent looking at a list of questions or adjusting the recording equipment to a minimum.
3. As a rule, keep your questions short.
4. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no."
5. Try to keep your opinions out of the interview.
6. Don't interrupt your interviewee's answers. Use non-verbal communication (eye-contact and nodding) to encourage him or her.
7. Use follow-up questions to elicit more detailed information. When did that happen? Did that happen to you? What did you think about that?
8. Be prepared to let your interviewee take the discussion off in different directions. This can sometimes lead to unexpected and exciting discoveries.
9. Keep your interviews to a reasonable length. A typical length for an interview is between one and one and a half hours. It is the interviewer's responsibility to determine if the interview should be concluded because the interviewee is becoming fatigued or for any other reason.

10. Have the interviewee sign the release after explaining again how the information will be used.
11. Put a brief closing announcement on the tape at the end of the interview. For example: *“This is the end of the September 18, 2008, interview with Sara Baron. The interviewer was Donna Johnson.”*

After the interview:

1. Carefully save the recording so it can be retrieved later on.
2. Thank the interviewee
3. Review the recording of the interview later on in order to analyze the data, prepare for future interviews, and improve your interviewing technique.
4. If possible, have a transcript prepared for easy reference to the material covered and information given. (REV.com is not too expensive, does a good job and is easy to use)

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE & SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR SISTERHOOD

Heading:

Sisterhood:

Interviewee:

Contact information:

Position(s) in Sisterhood:

Interviewer:

Contact information:

Date of Interview:

Place of Interview:

Sample Questions:

- How long have you been a member of sisterhood? What office(s)/position(s) have you held? When?
- Tell us what committees you chaired or served on and what sisterhood “jobs” you did?
- What about your early years: What kind of home, vis-à-vis Judaism, were you raised in? What was your early Hebrew/Jewish education?
- Were your parents/family involved in Jewish organizations? If so, which ones? Did they belong to a synagogue? To sisterhood?
- Did your siblings have religious education? Was it different for boys and girls?
- What were your first commitments to Jewish organizational life? As a child? As an adult? Synagogue, sisterhood, other Jewish organizations?
- When did you first join sisterhood and did you feel at home as soon as you joined? Were there any problems?

- Did you have any specific role models in sisterhood? Tell us about them?
- If you served as sisterhood president, how long? Tell us about some of your interesting and innovative programs? Of what you accomplished, what are you most proud?
- During your involvement, what was the funniest or most interesting thing that happened? What are some of your most pleasant memories?
- What was the relationship between the sisterhood and the rabbi? Between the sisterhood and the congregational leadership?
- Was there anything you wanted to accomplish during your term of office/involvement that you did not get the chance to do?
- What area of sisterhood do you think needs to be strengthened most? What are today's challenges for sisterhood?
- If you were president today, what changes would you make?
- All in all, was your involvement in sisterhood a rewarding experience for you?
- What would you say to encourage others to assume leadership?
- Have you made long lasting friends through sisterhood?
- Anything else you would like to tell us?

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE & SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR REGION/BRANCH

Heading:

Region/Branch:

Interviewee:

Contact information:

Position(s) in Sisterhood:

Interviewer:

Contact information:

Date of Interview:

Place of Interview:

Sample Questions:

- How long have you been a member of this Branch/Region? What office(s)/position(s) have you held? When?
- Tell us what committees you chaired or served on and what Branch/Region "jobs" you did?
- Before you became involved in the Branch/Region:
 - Were you a sisterhood president?
 - What Sisterhood?
 - What other positions did you hold in sisterhood?
 - How many years were you a member?

- What about your early years: What kind of home, vis-à-vis Judaism, were you raised in? What was your early Hebrew/Jewish education?
- What were your first commitments to Jewish organizational life? As a child? As an adult? Synagogue, sisterhood, other Jewish organizations?
- When did you first join sisterhood and did you feel at home as soon as you joined? Were there any problems? How did you feel when you came aboard on Branch/Region?
- Did you have any specific role models in the Branch/Region? Tell us about them?
- What were some of the challenges you encountered as Branch/Region president/leader? To whom did you turn for help? Was it forthcoming?
- If you served as Branch/Region president, how long? Tell us about some of your interesting and innovative programs? Of what you accomplished, what are you most proud?
- What was the relationship between you in your position(s) in the Branch/Region and the Sisterhood and their leadership?
- Was there anything you wanted to accomplish during your term of office/involvement that you did not get the chance to do?
- What areas of the Region do you think needs to be strengthened most? What are today's challenges for the Region? How do they differ from when you were a leader in the Branch/Region?
- How did Women's League serve your Branch/Region and what suggestions do you have as to how to strengthen this relationship?
- If you were president today, what changes would you make?
- All in all, was your involvement in the Branch/Region a rewarding experience for you?
- During your involvement, what was the funniest or most interesting thing that happened? What are some of your most pleasant memories?
- What would you say to encourage others to assume leadership?
- Have you made long lasting friends via the Branch/Region?
- Anything else you would like to tell us?