

**Preparing the physical setting**

The environment for the interview should be chosen carefully. Distractions should be minimal. Noise from TVs, radios, etc should not interfere with the resident's ability to understand the questions and the interviewer's ability to hear the answers.

Furniture should be comfortable; lighting diffuse and not glaring; and the temperature comfortable for the resident. Be sure there is a bathroom nearby.

Privacy is paramount. Attempt to select a room where interruption is unlikely. Be sure to close the door. The resident's room may or may not suffice.

**Establishing Rapport**

Be sure to greet the resident, introduce yourself and your position with the facility.

Use "Mr" or "Mrs" to address the resident especially if this is your first meeting with the person.

Identify the reason for the interview and how the information will be used as well as protected. Explain how long the interview will last.

Face the individual and speak directly to him/her. Avoid permitting a younger family member from answering for the resident unless absolutely necessary.

**Structuring the Interview**

Plan sufficient time for the interview in case the resident has long answers or is slow to respond. Avoid making the resident feel pressured.

More than one interview may be necessary. Watch for signs of fatigue such as drooping shoulders, irritability, and facial expressions.

Avoid using medical jargon. Keep the questions simple especially if the resident has hearing or cognitive impairment.

Resist the urge to hurry answers by anticipating their response and answering for them. Do not interrupt.

Do restate the response should he/she begin to ramble and lose track of the question.

Do not end the interview too abruptly, but do stay on track with your allotted time. The resident may feel hurt by your quick exit. Indicate the interview is about over before the last question.

## **OLDER ADULT INTERVIEWS** **GOOD INFORMATION TO KNOW**

An interview is just like talking/visiting with someone, but with prepared questions.

"Triggers" are important when you're doing an older adult interview. The questions cannot be too broad such as "Tell me about your life." Triggers can be many things – questions about preferences, loved ones, keepsakes, hobbies, music, sports, etc.

During an interview, ask questions slowly, giving the person time to answer.

You can use some "closed" questions (which prompt a respondent to give only a "yes" or "no" answer), but most should be "open" questions like: "Tell me about..."; "Describe..."; "Why...?"; and "How...?"

If the person must respond to a predetermined list of answers, a printed copy of the choices is often helpful as a reference guide for the individual.

Start with easy, friendly questions and work your way up to more difficult or sensitive questions.

Listen carefully to what the person says; don't interrupt or correct. Maintain eye contact and show interest by leaning forward and nodding.

If someone is talking about an unhappy or painful experience, show that you understand how he/she feels ("That's very sad").

An interview shouldn't last more than an hour. People do best when they're not tired. You can always do another interview.

Don't forget to thank the person you've interviewed. They've been generous with their time and perhaps shared personal information. Let them know you value what they've shared.

*Adapted from* SV Bosak, [www.legacyproject.org](http://www.legacyproject.org)