

Project Interview Tips

Interviewing people as a part of your National History Day® research can be an interesting and valuable way to learn more about your selected topic.

You can interview a person who was a participant in your topic or find someone very knowledgeable about your topic.

Do I need interviews for my project?

No, interviews are not a mandatory part of a National History Day® project. Interviews can add first-hand experiences to your project and/or help give you information that aids in your research process.

Who should I interview?

Many people can be great sources for an interview. The best choices are those that have first-hand knowledge of a topic but there are other options, such as college professors, staff from historical institutions, teachers, librarians, writers, and more.

How do I prepare for an interview?

Interviews should not be the main source for your project. Interviews should add dimension/depth to your project. You should not expect your source to explain your entire topic choice to you.

1. Read and research many secondary sources about your subject. Having an overview of the topic will allow you to create better interview questions.
2. Look up some primary sources about your topic, use these as discussion points during your interview.
3. Write down a list of questions to ask the interviewee. The list should have 8 to 10 questions.
4. Before you interview, test all of your equipment. Check batteries, memory cards, etc. Be sure to be comfortable using all of your equipment. Is there a good wireless connection, if necessary?
5. Even if you record the interview, you still should have paper and pencil ready to jot down notes during the interview. This helps if your equipment malfunctions and to aid you in finding portions of the interview on the digital files.
6. Be sure to greet the interviewee with a verbal greeting and a handshake (if possible). Do not speak too fast, try to be slow and articulate. If you do not understand something, ask further questions. Remember to thank the person you interviewed.