



As genealogists, obtaining the information we want in the most efficient way possible is a high priority. When questioning family members, we need to be sure we are asking the right questions: ones that will get our relatives to paint as clear a picture possible of their past within the limited time we have to talk to them.

Below, we've compiled a list of good questions that you can print and bring along next time you visit an older relative. You probably won't get to them all in just one visit, but you can use them as a springboard for fascinating and valuable conversations.

## Family Details

- What is your full name?
- What are your brothers' and sisters' full names?
- What are your parents' and grandparents' full names?
- Do you share a name with someone else in the family?
- Where were your parents and grandparents from?
- Do you remember listening to your grandparents talking about their lives? What did they say?
- Did you ever meet any of your great-grandparents?
- When and where did your parents die? What do you remember about them?
- How did they die? Where were they hospitalized?
- Which cemetery are they buried in?
- Where did your in-laws live?
- What do you remember about the death of your in-laws?
- Who was the oldest relative you remember from when you were a child?

## Growing Up

- When and where were you born?
- Where was your first house?
- What are your earliest memories of your home?
- What other houses did you live in?
- Did you have a nickname growing up? If so, what was it and why?
- Have you had a nickname as an adult?
- Can you tell me a story or memory about your brothers and sisters?
- What did your family do for leisure when you were a child?



- Were there tasks you hated doing when you were a child?
- Do you remember a favorite lullaby or song?
- When times were tough, what did your family eat? Was there enough food?
- What were your favorite toys?
- What were your favorite games?
- Was there a style of clothing or fashion that you liked the most?
- When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- How old were you when you started going out at night?
- Describe what you were like as a young adult.
- Did you belong to a religion growing up? Do you still belong to that religion, or to a different one?
- What religion did your parents and/or grandparents belong to?

## Education & Profession

- What school did you go to and where was it?
- How did you feel about going to school?
- What was your favorite subject at school and why?
- Which subject was the most difficult?
- Who was your favorite teacher and why?
- What is your favorite school memory?
- What were your grades like?
- What did you wear to school?
- What sports did you participate in at school?
- Was there a meeting place where you liked to spend time?
- Did you receive any special awards for studies or activities at school?
- How many years of education have you completed?
- Do you have a technical diploma or degree?
- What was your first job?
- How old were you when you retired?
- How did you decide on your profession?
- What jobs have you done over the years?
- If you were in the military, what were your duties and when and where did you serve?



## Love & Relationships

- Do you remember your first date?
- When and where did you meet your spouse(s)?
- How long did you know each other before getting married?
- How did you propose?
- When and where did you get married?
- Describe the ceremony.
- Who was present? (Witnesses, bridesmaids, etc.)
- Did you have a honeymoon? Where?
- Have you been married more than once?
- How would you describe your current (or most recent) spouse?
- What do you most admire about him or her?
- How long have you been/were you married?
- If your spouse is no longer alive, when and where did he or she die?
- What advice would you give to a child or grandchild for their wedding day?
- Tell me the name of someone who has been your good friend for many years.
- Has there been anyone in your life that you would consider a soul mate? Who was it and why do you feel that special bond?
- Who has changed your life?

## Parenting

- How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?
- How many children do you have?
- What are their names and dates of birth, and where do they currently live?
- Why did you give them those names?
- Do you remember things that your children did when they were little that really surprised you?
- What is one of the funniest things your children did when they were little?
- What was the most fun you had while raising your kids?
- If you had to do it again, what would you change about the way you raised your family?
- What was the most challenging part of raising children?
- Did you consider yourself a strict parent?
- What was the most rewarding thing about parenting?



- Did any of your children break anything of yours?
- Did you have to treat any of your children differently from the others? Why?
- How did you feel when your oldest child began school?
- What advice would you give your children and grandchildren about being a parent?

## Hobbies & Leisure

- What are your hobbies?
- What do you like to do when you are not working?
- What types of books do you like to read?
- Have you ever played a musical instrument?
- Do you consider yourself creative?
- What's the funniest joke you've ever known?
- What activities have you enjoyed as an adult?
- What is the longest trip you've ever made?
- What has been your favorite vacation spot?
- What pets have you had?
- What organizations or groups did you belong to?
- Is there something you've always wanted to do but haven't done yet?

## Life Experiences

- Did you suffer from any childhood illnesses?
- Do you have any genetic health problems?
- Do you exercise regularly?
- Have you ever had any bad habits?
- Have you ever been a victim of a crime?
- Have you had any major accidents?
- Has anyone ever saved your life?
- Have you ever been hospitalized? For what?
- Have you ever had surgery?
- What do you consider the most important inventions in your lifetime?
- Do you remember the first time you saw a car, a TV, or a refrigerator?
- How different was the world when you were a child?
- Do you remember your family talking about politics?



- How would you define yourself politically?
- Did you live through any wars?
- Have you admired any president or world leader that you've seen in power?
- How did you live when there were food shortages?
- What are the hardest decisions you've had to make?
- If you could change anything about yourself, what would it be?
- What is the most difficult thing you have ever experienced?
- What is the most incredible thing that has happened to you?
- Have you ever met someone famous?
- Have you ever won an award as an adult?
- How do you feel about your major decisions in life, such as profession, studies, and spouse?