

10 Conversation Tips for Your STORYCORPS App Interview

1. Plan Your Questions

Before you record anything, use the app's question lists to plan your questions (or write your own), and share them ahead of time with your partner. This simple preparation will help you get the most out of your time together.

2. Ask Warm-Up Questions

Press the record button and follow the prompts to introduce yourself and your partner. Then ask a few warm-up questions, like "Where were you born?" or "Can you describe the first time we met?"

3. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Avoid questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no." Instead, use language like "Tell me about..." or "What was it like when..." This lets the storyteller steer you toward what is most important to them.

4. Ask Follow-Up Questions

While the app will prompt you with your next question, be prepared to ask follow-ups or diverge from your question list if you're curious about something. If you'd like to hear more, try "And then what happened?" or "How did that make you feel?" or "What were you thinking in that moment?"

5. Think of It as a Conversation

Use your selected questions as a guide, not a script. If your partner goes off topic, go with it. You can redirect them to your original question later. Think of it as a conversation; there's no right or wrong thing to talk about, as long as it's meaningful to you.

6. Tell a Story

Don't hesitate to tell a story about your partner, and to bring up your favorite shared memories. This can be a time to tell your partner how much they mean to you, and why you want to record with them today.

7. Set Up Context

Keep in mind that future listeners may not be familiar with the specific people and places you mention. Set up context where needed with questions like "Who was Uncle Steve?" and "Why was he such an influence on you?"

8. Encourage Vivid Details

Questions that encourage vivid details can make the story special. Invoke the senses by asking your partner to remember these details. For example: "What did your kitchen smell like when you were growing up?" or "What images stand out when you think about Granddad?"

9. Plan Some Reflective Questions

Keep an eye on the app's timer so that you are aware of when there are 10 and 5 minutes left. End your interview with reflective questions, such as "What legacy would you like to leave?" or "What advice would you give me about being a parent?"

10. Relax and Be Yourself

Enjoy the opportunity to share stories and reflections with your interview partner. Just be yourself, be curious, and let the conversation flow.