



Section 1

Recording Interviews

The recording process from start to finish.

Detailed information on equipment, including recommendations on headphones, recorders, and microphones, can be found in Section 3.



In this section

Before the Interview **3**

Listen to Stories

Set a Date & Time

Prepare the Participants

Choose an Interview Location

Choose Recording Equipment
& Make a Test Recording

The Interview **11**

Welcome Participants

Check Microphone Levels & Placement

Start the Interview

Wrapping Up

After the Interview **14**

Take Photographs

Preserve & Share the Conversation

Share the Interview

1. LISTEN TO STORIES

One of the best ways to familiarize yourself with the recording process is to listen to interviews recorded as part of the StoryCorps Memory Loss Initiative. The following stories on the companion CD contain examples of strategies used to create a successful interview experience with participants who have memory loss.

TRACK 2



Priya Morgenstern and **Bhavani Jaroff** interview their father, **Ken Morgenstern**.

At the time of the interview, five years had passed since Ken was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. His daughters interviewed him to help preserve the memories that remained. Despite Ken's difficulties remembering, he is still able to share an intimate moment with his two daughters. Carol and Bhavani do a great job at keeping the mood light and positive, and rephrasing questions and providing context when necessary.

TRACK 3



Stephanie Cook interviews her 88-year-old mother, **Loretta Dranoff**, while in a care facility.

Stephanie interviews her mother about her parents' life together as concert pianists. The interview allowed Loretta to show off her strengths and talents and is a great example of how easy it is to build a conversation around favorite activities. By letting her mother lead the story, Stephanie honored her independence and allowed a genuine and beautiful moment to blossom.

2. SET A DATE & TIME

How much time do I need?

In total, a StoryCorps interview is about one hour in length. We've found that 40 minutes of uninterrupted time is ideal for a personal conversation, allowing room for several stories to unfold. Ten minutes before and after the recording session allows the Facilitator to make participants feel comfortable, adjust the recording equipment, and take photographs.

Interviewing people living with memory loss may take longer than one hour, so consider whether you should budget extra time.

How far in advance should I set a recording date?

Set a date at least two weeks ahead to allow participants to arrange their schedules and prepare for the interview by thinking of stories they want to record, as well as questions they would like to ask. It will also allow your organization to arrange a recording space, gather recording equipment, and schedule staff to facilitate and/or assist interview participants.

What time of day is best?

We recommend scheduling interviews when participants are most alert and comfortable. For most people living with memory loss this will be in the morning, but choose the best time for each participant. Consider organizational constraints as well, including meal times and other activities, to ensure the interview is uninterrupted and the space is quiet.

Reminding participants

We recommend calling at least one of the participants a few days before the interview to remind them of the exact date, time, and location of the interview, and to answer any questions they have. Participants with memory loss may also benefit from a written reminder, such as a note on their personal calendar.

SCHEDULING

Set a date and time for the interview(s) at least **two weeks in advance**.

Notify the **Storyteller** and **Interviewer** as early as possible.

Remind both the **Storyteller** and **Interviewer 1-2 days** before their interview.

Pick a time that works for your organization and the participants.

Plan for at least **1 hour** per interview.

Use the **Sample Interview Schedule** in Section 3.

3. PREPARE THE PARTICIPANTS

Since the process of being interviewed, or interviewing someone else, is new for many people, we strongly recommend preparing the participants ahead of time. Explain the recording process to them step by step, answer any questions they might have, and emphasize that everybody's story is important.

How should I prepare the Storyteller?

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE INTERVIEW. Make it clear that this is a fun and casual conversation with a friend, family member, or staff person, not a test of what they can remember. Explain that the conversation will last about 40 minutes, the Interviewer will be asking the Storyteller questions, and the conversation will be recorded.

PROVIDE THE STORYTELLER WITH THE INTERVIEW PACKET IN SECTION 3. Walk the person through the material and leave it with him or her for reference.

HELP THE STORYTELLER IDENTIFY STORIES TO SHARE. Storytellers may be unsure of what to talk about, or concerned that they do not have anything important to say. Help them brainstorm. Try to focus on stories they remember well to avoid frustration. Generally, stories about childhood, major life events—such as marriage and children— and favorite activities are excellent candidates.

COLLECT ANY PHOTOS OR PERSONAL ITEMS. Bringing meaningful personal objects and photographs to the interview can help guide the process and spark conversation.

How should I prepare the Interviewer?

EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE INTERVIEW. Walk Interviewers through the process so they understand how it works. Remind them that the recording time is 40 minutes so they can prioritize their questions. Make it clear that the conversation is friendly and personal, and not an attempt to record every fact of the Storyteller's life. Also make it clear that the Interviewer and Storyteller will be guiding the interview, not the Facilitator.

PROVIDE THEM WITH THE INTERVIEW PACKET IN SECTION 3. This packet provides background on StoryCorps, provides guidance for creating a list of questions, and explains some of the challenges they might encounter when interviewing someone with memory loss.

REMIND THE INTERVIEWER THAT THE EXPERIENCE ISN'T ABOUT RECORDING FACTS. By framing the experience as one of recording stories, not just names and dates, you'll help shape the expectations of the Interviewers and contribute toward the creation of a positive, "no wrong answer" environment.

SHARE STORYCORPS STORIES WITH THEM TO PROVIDE INSPIRATION. Interviewers can benefit greatly from listening to some of the many interviews StoryCorps has recorded. You can provide them with the Memory Loss Initiative companion CD, or direct them to storycorps.org/listen.

PREPARING PARTICIPANTS

Explain the interview process to both the Interviewers and Storytellers in advance.

Provide them with the **Storyteller and Interviewer Packets** in Section 3. Have the Facilitator read through them as well, so they can answer any questions.

Collect any photographs or personal items that participants can talk about during their interview.

Tell participants to visit storycorps.org to listen to StoryCorps interviews, or play them segments from the companion CD.

4. CHOOSE AN INTERVIEW LOCATION

What is the best kind of space in which to record interviews?

The best audio quality can be obtained in recording spaces with the following characteristics:

- Situated in a relatively low-traffic area of the building
- Small or medium-sized (like an office or meeting space)
- Carpeted
- Few or no windows
- Away from machine noise (such as kitchens or ringing telephones)

If possible, close air vents and turn off cell phones and noisy appliances to minimize noise. You can also post the “Recording in Progress” sign from Section 3 on the door.

How can I maximize participant comfort?

For participant comfort, look for a recording room that:

- Is easily accessible to the participants
- Is free of potential distractions (televisions, clocks, computer screens, windows onto visible activity)
- Has a corner or section of the room that can be dedicated to the interview experience
- Combines soft table/tableside lighting to create an at-home atmosphere with overhead lighting for visibility
- Offers a small to medium-sized table where you can place the recording equipment (and participants can rest their hands)

If your organization is a residential facility, consider using the Storyteller’s own room. Recording in a familiar space is helpful.

RECORDING LOCATION

Choose a space that’s both quiet and comfortable for participants.

Ensure that you won’t be interrupted during the interview. Post the “Recording in Progress” sign from Section 3 on the door.

Make modifications if necessary. Consider using more comfortable chairs, adding softer lighting, and removing unnecessary items from the room.

If the room is unfamiliar to the Storytellers, acquaint them with it a few days before the interview.

Think about the difference between sitting in a booth at a restaurant and sitting at a table.

You can share meals and have great conversations in either location, but there is something special and intimate about a restaurant booth. That is how your participants should feel.

Example

Here's an example of what your recording room might look like. Notice that the setup includes chairs for both participants across the table from one another, as well as an additional seat for the Facilitator. You probably have a room in your facility that can be set up in a way similar to this.



KEY

- 1** Two chairs close together at the table for the Interviewer and Storyteller
- 2** Chair for Facilitator
- 3** Lamps
- 4** Closed air vent
- 5** Carpet
- 6** “Recording in Progress” sign

5. CHOOSE RECORDING EQUIPMENT & MAKE A TEST RECORDING

You do not need to outfit your organization with all the trappings of a professional recording studio. Equipment can be as simple as a cell phone, a tape recorder, a video camera, or a computer.

There are many inexpensive, easy-to-use recorders available at your local electronics store or for purchase online. Don't forget to consider the equipment your organization already has, or borrow equipment from a local community organization.

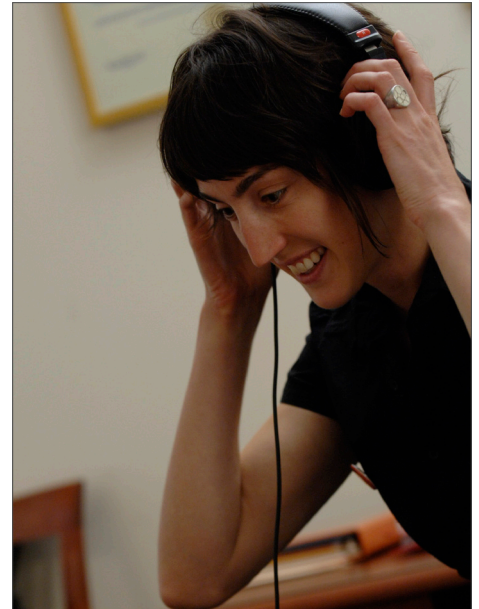
For more detailed information on choosing equipment, read the Equipment Recommendations in Section 3.

Test recording

Whatever recording equipment you choose, we strongly suggest that you practice with it before your interview. Make a test recording in the interview space to make sure the equipment works and your voice sounds clear.

- Connect the microphone to the recording device, and position it about five inches away from your face.
- Press record, then speak for about 30 seconds. Press stop.
- Play back the recording you just made to ensure the microphone and recording worked, your voice sounded clear, and the volume levels were good. (If not, run a few more tests and play around with the volume control and microphone placement.)

The test recording will inform you if you need to make any changes to the recording space, or if there are any special instructions to give to participants. If you'll be training others on how to use the recording equipment, this is a good opportunity to do so.



RECORDING DEVICE



This is the machine that records sound, such as a tape deck, digital recorder, or iPhone. It is the hub of the recording set-up—it takes inputs

like a sound from a microphone and churns out recordings, such as digital files and cassette tapes.

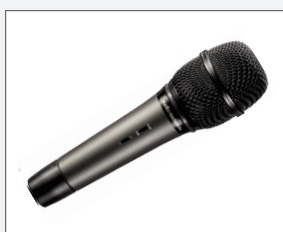
RECORDING MEDIA



Record the interviews onto physical media, such as CDs, or onto your computer's hard drive. Burn copies of the interviews onto blank

CDs or DVDs to share with the participants and play on a stereo.

MICROPHONE



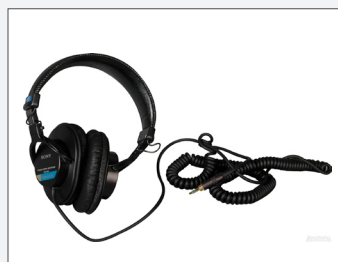
Some recorders come with one or two built-in microphones. Others allow you to connect separate microphones to the device.

With built-in microphones, participants should be equally close to the recording device so that the sound picks up evenly.

If you use one external microphone, set it up on a stand between the participants, or ask the participants to hand the microphone back and forth as they speak. (Note that passing the microphone can create unwanted noise.)

If your device permits, we recommend using two external microphones—one for each participant. This captures sound better and is easier for everyone involved.

HEADPHONES



Headphones that connect to the recording device allow Facilitators to monitor the sound levels on the recording. In-

stead of hearing the voices in the environment, they hear exactly what the voices sound like on tape and can adjust the volume as needed. Facilitators should do this during the equipment test and during the interview.

It's also a good idea to have headphones on hand for participants to listen to their interview. This is particularly important for those who have problems hearing.

1. WELCOME PARTICIPANTS

Welcome the participants and make sure they feel comfortable in the recording space. It helps to review the interview process with them, along with the following key points:

- This is meant to be a casual, personal conversation—there are no right or wrong answers.
- The recording will be around 40 minutes, but you can stop earlier if needed and/or take breaks.
- You can and should use your normal voices during the interview; there's no need to speak louder than usual or use a "radio" voice.
- The point is to have fun.

Explain that your role is to operate the recording equipment, keep time during the interview, and give hand signals when ten and five minutes are remaining. You will also ask them questions if it is appropriate.

2. CHECK MICROPHONE LEVELS & PLACEMENT

Next, check the microphone volume levels by having the participants answer a simple question, such as, "What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?" Adjust the microphone placement as necessary.

You can remind them to try not to fidget or move too much during the recording, as this movement will be picked up by the microphone. Kindly ask people to remove any noisy jewelry, throw away chewing gum, and turn off cell phones. Ensure that the microphones aren't obscuring the participants' views of one another.

3. START THE INTERVIEW

Press record, and ask participants to start the interview by stating their full name, today's date, and their relationship to each other. Use the Interview Introduction Card in Section 3 to help with this step.

The Interviewer can then start the interview by asking the Storyteller a question from his or her list.

THE INTERVIEW

At the beginning, explain the process, make participants feel comfortable, and check the audio quality.

Use the Interview Introduction Card in Section 3 to begin the interview.

Encourage participants by using facial expressions and body language to indicate you are paying attention.

Be prepared to ask questions or assist participants if the conversation becomes difficult or confusing.

Alert the participants when the interview time is drawing to a close.

Encourage participants to say how they feel about each other at the end of the interview.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Make sure participants know that they are not being tested on their memory, especially if they have recently participated in standardized tests and diagnostic procedures, which may have caused them stress or anxiety.

Encourage Storytellers to tell stories, not just answer questions, so that their voice and manner of speaking are recorded. Families tell us that even when the story is not remembered accurately, the voice of their loved one is a gift to be treasured itself.

The choice is up to the participants whether or not they wish to speak about their diagnosis or symptoms of memory loss.

Be patient. Recall and speech are slower with those who have memory loss, and rushing the process often makes participants feel anxious.

Interview Tips for the Facilitator

If the Storyteller doesn't understand a question or cannot answer, the Interviewer or Facilitator can ask the question in a different way. Refer to the Interviewer Packet in Section 3 for more information.

The Facilitator should remain attentive and give encouraging looks during the interview. Although the Facilitator is somewhat outside the conversation, looking interested can help sustain a participant's confidence.

Keep track of the volume levels and microphone placement. If participants have moved around during the interview, you may need to adjust the volume or ask them to move closer to the microphones.

If participants get stuck, interject with your own question. When the Storyteller responds, make sure he or she directs the response to the interview partner, not you. (A simple hand gesture will indicate this.)

Take breaks if needed. The interview can always be resumed later.

4. WRAPPING UP

As time winds down, it's important to create some closure for the interview. Use hand signals to notify the Interviewer when ten minutes and five minutes remain. This will give the person time ask any remaining questions he or she might have.

Storytellers should be given the opportunity to ask a question or two of their own. The Interviewer can ask the Storyteller, "Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?" You can also prompt the exchange. The Interviewer might also say something like "My last question is..." to draw the interview to a close.

Allow the interview participants to tell each other how they feel at the end of the interview. A simple "thank you" or "I love you" on tape is a wonderful sentiment to preserve and provides a nice way to end the recording. You can prompt this by asking, "Can you tell each other how you feel about one another?"

Stop the recording, then thank each participant.

Congratulations! Thank you for investing time and resources to implement the Commemorate program.

1. TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS

Take photos of each participant separately and together after the interview to keep a visual record of the experience. Encourage participants who know each other well to hug and show affection. If possible, provide participants with either printed or digital copies of the photos.

2. PRESERVE & SHARE THE CONVERSATION

If possible, transfer the interview to a computer and burn copies on CD or DVD for each participant. Let the participants know they are welcome to share the recording and make copies for friends and family. Use file-sharing websites or social networks to share the recording online. You can also share digital scans of personal items or photographs mentioned in the interview.

Your organization can start its own Commemorate archive by labeling the recording with the participants' names and interview date, then storing it in a safe place.

3. SHARE THE INTERVIEW

We encourage you and the participants to think about the interview not only as one 40-minute conversation, but also as an opportunity to share and celebrate their stories with others.

With the permission of the participants, your organization can share these recordings on your website to promote the programs you offer, and to showcase the clients you serve and how you care about them.

Encourage family members to play the interview at special events and gatherings. This is especially powerful when a person is nearing the end of life. Bringing together friends, family members, and staff who know this person and listening to the interview is a great way to celebrate the Storyteller's life as a group.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Take photographs of the participants.

Make copies of the recording for your organization and both participants.

Encourage participants to share their interview with friends and family.

Find ways for your organization to celebrate the stories you've recorded as a group.