

Student Interview Guide

Now it is your turn to be the oral historian. Interview an older relative, neighbor, or family friend (your **narrator**) about their childhood, traditions, and any move to a new place. These steps are adapted from the guide JIMENA uses to record its own testimonies.

Before the interview

- Choose a narrator and ask permission. Explain your project and that the interview will take 20 to 30 minutes.
- Ask whether you may record, and tell your narrator who will see or hear the recording.
- Ask your narrator to bring a photo or object that holds a memory.
- Choose your questions and practice them. Test your recording device.
- Find a quiet place without interruptions.

During the interview

- Begin by thanking your narrator and asking about the meaning of their name.
- Ask open questions, never yes or no questions.
- Ask one question at a time and do not interrupt.
- Use the **six second rule**: after an answer, wait six seconds. Memories often come after a pause.
- Ask follow up questions: Can you describe it? When was that? How did you feel?
- If a topic is painful, it is fine to skip it.

Interview questions

Choose 8 to 10

BEGINNINGS

- What is your full name, and is there a story behind it?
- Where were you born? Describe your childhood home.

FAMILY AND LANGUAGE

- What languages did your family speak at home?
- Were there sayings or expressions your family used often?

DAILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE

- What was your neighborhood like? Who were your neighbors?
- What foods remind you of your childhood?
- How did your family celebrate holidays and special occasions?

CHANGE AND MOVING

- Did your family ever move to a new place? Why?
- What did you bring with you, and what did you leave behind?
- What was hard, and what was good, about starting over?

LOOKING BACK

- What do you miss most?
- What do you want young people today to remember about your story?

After the interview

- Thank your narrator in writing, and offer them a copy of the recording or your summary.
- Ask permission before you share the interview with anyone outside your class.
- Complete the summary sheet below while the conversation is fresh.

Interview summary sheet

Narrator		Interviewer	
Date		Place	
Narrator's place of birth		Length of interview	

1 Three important things I learned from my narrator:

2 The most powerful quote from the interview (and the minute):

3 One detail I could check with another source, and how I would check it:

4 A question I would ask in a second interview:

5 What surprised me, and why this story should be remembered:

Adapted from JIMENA's Oral History Guide. Adults and families who want to preserve a Sephardic or Mizrahi family story can share it with JIMENA at qua.jimena.org/share-your-story/share.