

Sample Interview Questions

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Childhood & Home

Where were you born?

What was (your town) like?

Where did you go to school?

What was the school like?

What did you learn there?

(repeat for additional schools – Jewish & secular)

When were you born?

What name were you given when you were born?

Were you named after anyone? (namesake)

Do you have a Hebrew name?

Did you have other names or nicknames in your life?

(get spellings for all – actual and/or phonetic)

Where did you live? Neighborhood? Street address?

Did you live in a Jewish neighborhood?

Did your family live in different places? Where?

What was your home like when you were a child?

What languages were spoken in your home? & by whom?

How religious was your family?

Did they go to a synagogue? Which one?

Did they keep a kosher home?

Males: Did you have a Bar Mitzvah?

Parents

What was your father's name?

Where was he born? When?

How much education did he have?

Was he religious?

What did he do for a living?

Can you describe his appearance?

What was he like as a person? as a father?

Was he in the military?

Did he live through any wars? What was his experience?

Did he have any special interests or talents?

Do you remember anything special about him?

When did he die? Where? Where is he buried?

What was your mother's name?

(follow with similar questions)

was she a good cook? favorite foods?

Did she work outside the home?

How many children did she have?

How and where did your parents meet?
Was it an arranged marriage?
Where and when did they get married?
Do you remember any stories about your parents?
(If there were additional marriages, get basic info on spouses and other children)

Siblings

Do/did you have brothers and sisters?
Who was the oldest?
Name(s)? namesake?
Place and date of birth
Education
Occupation
Marriage & spouse
Where they lived
Did they have children? – names, birthdates, spouses, children
Are they living today? Yes: where? No: when and where did they die?
Who was the next oldest? Etc.
(Repeat questions for each sibling)

Grandparents & Ancestors

Do you remember your grandparents?
For each grandparent ask:
Full name(s), namesake, Hebrew name
Place and date of birth
What language(s) did they speak?
What was he/she like?
Where did they live?
Education
Occupation
Circumstances of their marriage
Religious observance
Immigrant history, if applicable
Death: when? where? Cause of death? Cemetery?
Do you remember something special about your grandparents?
Do you remember anything else about your grandparents?

Did you have any aunts and uncles?
(get names etc. for each family unit, including names of spouses and children)

Do you know anything about other members of the family?
Do you know where your family came from in Europe? (names, dates, places)
Do you know when and where your ancestors first settled in America?
Did they move to other places?
Do you know if any of the family names (given & surnames) were changed in America?

Marriage & Family

When did you get married?

How did you meet your husband/wife?

What was your wedding like?

Who was there from your family?

Date and place of wedding?

Who conducted the wedding?

What is your husband/wife's full name?

Where and when was he/she born?

Do you have children? grandchildren?

Ask for name, birth date, birth place, and name of spouse for each child and each grandchild.

For Immigrants (or their children)

When did you come to America?

Where did you come from?

Why did you leave your home country?

How did you arrange the trip?

Who did you travel with?

How did you make the trip?

What was the voyage like?

What was the name of the ship?

Where and when did you enter this country?

Where did you settle in the new country and why there?

What were the early years like?

Did any family members come here before you? Who? When? Why?

Where did they settle?

Who was left behind in Europe?

What towns did family members live in?

Do you have any documents relating to your travels and immigration?

Do you have relatives who were murdered in the Holocaust?

Do you have relatives who were in Europe and survived the Holocaust?

Other

Holocaust survivors - Some survivors will be willing to talk about their wartime experiences and others won't. You'll need to approach this sensitively. Be mindful that asking about pre-war and wartime memories may stir up painful emotions about losses and suffering.

Medical history - If you are concerned about family medical history, ask about cause of death and other significant illnesses and symptoms.

BE SURE TO ASK TO SEE FAMILY PICTURES, DOCUMENTS & HEIRLOOMS