

FAMILY HISTORY  
QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- Tell me the names of your parents and grandparents and where they were born, where they grew up, and where they were living when you were born.
- Tell me what they told you about your own birth. Anything memorable about the pregnancy/trip to the hospital/delivery/first visitors
- Tell about your earliest memories. Inside the house and with the family/outside the house and out in the neighborhood and the community
- How aware were you when you were a little kid of what was going on out in the world? First “news” you remember hearing or discussed at home/growing awareness of the broader U.S. and other countries
- Tell about the pets your family had when you were a kid.
- What kinds of activities did your family do? Games/reading aloud/music (both recordings and anything anybody in the family played)/picnics/family reunions
- How were holidays celebrated in your family?
- What religious affiliations, political leanings, and social or civic group memberships did your family have? Family members who were in military service or other commitments that took them away
- Describe your awareness of entertainment media and popular culture, favorite books, songs you liked.
- Describe your first memories of school. Teachers/classroom antics and disasters
- What kinds of stories did your parents tell you about their own upbringing? Where they grew up/what their lives were like when they were kids/how they described their parents/day-to-day life (food, their houses, holidays, radio, early TV, movies)
- What kinds of notable characters were there from the extended family?
- For all of these topics, you should focus special attention on funny and/or unusual episodes and people as you are answering these questions. You can also go on through your older childhood, teen, and adult years with many of the same questions and topics.
- How did they earn a living?



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# DEEP DIVE QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

- Do you (or anyone else) think your family was normal? Did you have any sense during your early life that your family might be a little different from other families?
- How do you remember feeling when you found out other families did things differently from yours? Discipline/food/cleanliness/ways of relating to one another
- How important were your family's national origins and sense of ethnicity? Ways that sense was expressed
- How optimistic would you say the members of your family were? E.g., regarding their sense of confidence, as so many have commented on, that each generation would "do better" than the one before
- What do you know about what became of the kids you grew up with? From the neighborhood/school
- Have you been back to the places where you lived when you were young? How do they look to you now?
- What are some of your favorite memories of growing up?
- What are some of the funniest/silliest/craziest things you did?
- (If you feel the following isn't risky territory)
- Do you think you had a happy childhood? Things you wish had been different/things you wouldn't change a bit
- Were you proud of members of your family? Were they proud of you?
- How do you think the people in your community thought of your family?
- What do you hope people will say about your family and what their up to today fifty years from now?