

PUBLIC MEMORY CENTRE

Oral History Archive

University of Malta

**INSTRUCTIONS
AND
DOCUMENTATION**

TIPS TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

Prepared for the Oral History projects – Public Memory Centre
University of Malta

Preparations:

1. An informal pre-interview meeting with the person you want to record is recommended. This will help you to start knowing him/her better. Take the opportunity to note any problems which you think will influence the interview. You can jot down short biographical details [fill in the **Biography Card** see below] with the help of the interviewee. You should also explain the purpose of your interview.
2. Set date and place for the interview. Always keep in mind the suggestions given by the person in focus. The interview should be conducted in a location, which is comfortable and without noise distractions.
3. Prepare yourself well through background research on the subject. Read about and acquire as much information, by all means possible, on the specific themes of your concern.
4. When structuring the interview questions, keep in mind the topics of your interest and relate these to the person you are going to record.
5. Each question must be short. Ask only one question at a time. Avoid questions that solicit simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Ask open-ended questions.
6. Although you need not follow the exact sequence of the questions you prepare, a structured question list will provide you with a clear plan and logical sequence. This will give cohesiveness to your interview.
7. Check that your equipment is in working order before parting for the interview.

8. Arrival on location: Greetings. Then, set your video or audio recorder in the best possible position without hindering communication and eye contact. Do not hold microphone in hand.
You will have to test the voice level of the person concerned before starting the actual recording.

The Interview:

9. Always treat your host/interviewee with the expected courtesy. Make yourself available to answer any questions he/she might want to put to you.
10. Begin the interview by recording short biographical details on your informant. Then proceed with your questions.
11. During the interview, make the interviewee feel relaxed. *For this reason:* minimize paper work; be careful of any formal and paternalist tonality of voice or body gestures; speak clearly; adapt physical posture accordingly.
12. Do not challenge what the person is recollecting, even if it sounds strange or exaggerated. Use probing questions.
13. Never interrupt his/her reminiscences. If need be, slowly ask other questions to redirect the narrator to talk on those issues of your concern.
14. Be careful not to lead or 'spoon-feed' by your questions or gestures.
15. Do not stop the recorder except when asked to by the interviewee. If asked to, stop the recording at once.
16. Interviews should not take more than sixty to ninety minutes each session. Be alert to any signs of fatigue, unrest or boredom.

17. After finishing the interview, do not 'pack and go': leave politely, with the intention of keeping a friendly contact. Courtesy and gratitude towards your host are to be shown throughout the interview process and afterwards.
18. Make sure that you have the interviewee's approval to be quoted and to deposit the audio/video recording in the Oral History Archive – the Public Memory Centre. For copyright protection ask the interviewee to fill the **Copyright and Clearance** form. One can choose to record his/her consent on tape.

After the Interview:

19. Label the cd carefully. Labels should include full name of person interviewed, place, date and time of the interview as well, as the sequence number of the recording. Write your name and duration of the interview in minutes.
20. List ten or more key themes [as key words], which have been discussed during the interview. Fill in the **Reference Aid** form. You can download this and all other necessary forms from this web site.
21. Getting to deposit your tapes: Together with the original recording, you should also bring in the ready-filled **Deed of Deposit** and **Copyright and Clearance** forms.
22. We will attempt to provide the interviewee with a copy of the recorded interview.

Aim to 'broadcast quality' equipment to ensure the preservation of voice sound.

Biography Card and Reference Aid form

An interviewer can utilise the **Biography card** presented here. Filling this card will further facilitate cataloging and provide ready at hand information on all interviewees. In order to help the indexing process, each interviewer/depositor should fill in the **Reference Aid form**, by listing ten key topics discussed in the interview and including a short summary.

Public Memory Centre
University of Malta

BIOGRAPHY CARD

Prepared by the Public Memory Centre
University of Malta

Interviewee.

Dep.no.

Full name _____

(Isem u kunjom):

Place and date of Birth place _____ date _____

(Post u data tat-Twelid)

Brothers and sisters _____

(Ahwa:)

Father's occupation _____

(Xoghol tal-missier)

Mother's occupation _____

(Xoghol tal-Omm)

Emigration Where to _____ Dates _____

(Safar/Emigrazzjoni)(fejn)

(dati)

Occupations _____

(Xogholijiet: fejn dat)i

Places where he/she lived. _____

(Bliet jew irhula fejn ghex/ghexet)

Children _____

(Tfal)

Reference Aid Form

Public Memory Centre

University of Malta

Deposit no:

Interviewer [full name] _____

Details on Interview:

Interviewed person [full name]: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Duration: _____

In order to help in the indexing process and to facilitate research kindly fill in the following:

a. Enter the key topics dealt with in your interview [Use Key words]:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

b. Please write a short summary of the above oral reminiscence:

ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

COPYRIGHT ON ACCESS AND USE

In order to avoid problems at a later stage, a set of standard forms have been designed to regulate access and use of the recorded oral testimonies deposited at the Oral History Archive. The **interviewee assigning copyright to the Oral History Archive - Public Memory Centre, UOM, fills the Clearance and copyright form**. This is very important, as normally it is the narrator who has the actual copyright of the information he/ she provides on tape.

The deed of deposit form is to be filled by the interviewer in order to grant all rights, on the recording being deposited, to the Public Memory Centre. Indeed, the copyright on all the recorded interviews commissioned by our Centre instantly becomes the property of the OHC.

CLEARANCE AND COPYRIGHT FORM

Public Memory Centre

To be filled out by the Interviewee.

The purpose of this form is to ensure that your audio/video recorded interview is deposited in the Oral History Archive at the Public Memory Centre, the University of Malta, and utilized in accordance with your wishes.

Tapes and all related material will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication and educational activities only.

If you wish to limit public access to your contribution (for up to a twenty year period) please state this and any other conditions you may wish to make:

I hereby assign the copyright of my interview to the Public Memory Centre - University of Malta.

Signature: _____ date: _____

Family name: _____ First Name _____

Address Number _____ Street _____

Suburb _____ State _____ Post Code _____

Tel _____ fax _____

e-mail: _____

For official Use Only

Deposit No: _____

Series Title: _____

Length in minutes: _____

Registered by : _____

DEED OF DEPOSIT

Public Memory Centre

University of Malta

To be filled out by the Interviewer

To be filled by interviewer/depositor (must be over 18 years of age)

Family name: _____ First Name _____

Address Number _____ Street _____

Suburb _____ State _____ Post Code _____

Occupation. _____

I am hereby depositing in the Public Memory Centre, the University of Malta, the audio/video recordings of my interview/s conducted by me with _____

on / / 2009 and other material [List overleaf] **for research and educational purposes** only.

I grant to the above Public Memory Centre all of the rights I possess in those recordings. I understand that the OH Archive at the Public Memory Centre grants me license to make and to authorise other bona fide researchers to make use of the contents of these recordings. The foregoing gift and grant of right is subject to the following restrictions (if any):

Sign. by depositor: _____

For official Use

Deposit no: _____

Registered by: _____

(Full name and sign) _____

Public Memory Centre

**List of personal documents, photos or any other donations to the
Public Memory Centre.**

Donated by:

Date:

Address:

Tel no.:

Photos:

Records:

Prints:

Manuscripts:

Ephemeras:

Others:

For official use only: