

Interview Questions

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Yourself

1. What is the name you were given at birth?
2. When were you born? Where? Hospital or at home?
3. Were you named after a relative or family friend? Why was your name chosen?
4. Have you ever had a nickname? Who gave it to you and why?
5. Did your parents or siblings like to tell any funny or embarrassing baby stories about you?
6. What did you want to be when you grew up?

Family

7. What is your mother's name?
8. When and where was she born?
9. Is she still alive? When did she die?
10. What is your most vivid image of your mother?
11. What is your father's name?
12. When and where was he born?
13. Is he still alive? When did he die?
14. What is your most vivid image of your father?
15. Where did your parents meet?
16. When and where did they get married?
17. What are your brothers and sisters names?
18. What is the most enjoyable memory of time spent with your parents, your family?
19. What are some of the most valuable lessons your parents taught you?

Grandparents

20. What were the names of your mother's parents?
21. When and where were they born and where did they live?
22. What did they do for a living?

23. Do you have personal memories of them? What were they like?

24. What were the names of your father's parents?

25. When and where were they born and where did they live?

26. What did they do for a living?

27. Do you have personal memories of them? What were they like?

28. What was the most enjoyable time spent with each grandparent?

29. Did they have a favorite story that you remember them telling?

30. What do you know about your grandparent's children, other than your parents?

31. What do you remember hearing about your GREAT-Grandparents?

32. Did you ever meet them?

33. From what part of the world did your family emigrate? Any stories told in your family about the crossing? Did they become U.S. citizens? Do you have any relatives in foreign countries?

34. Where did they settle in this country? Why?

35. Do you have any relatives who were famous? Or who took part in well-known historical events?

36. How far back can you trace your family tree?

Childhood

The family house

37. What type of house did you live in as a child? Other buildings on the same property?

38. If you moved during your childhood, tell where and when and what you can remember of each house and the family circumstances and the reason for the move.

39. In what room did you eat? Kitchen? Dining room?

40. How was your home heated?

Interview Questions (cont.)

41. Did you have a fireplace?
42. What kind of kitchen stove did your parents cook on? What fuel was used?
43. Did you have to buy the fuel or was this a chore, such as cutting wood, with which you had to help?
44. Did you always have electricity? If not, when did you get it? Was it a big deal?
45. Did you ever use candles or kerosene lamps?
46. Did your family have a cellar? Where did you store food?
47. Where did your family get water? Was it plentiful? What methods were used to conserve water?
- Family relations, responsibilities, conditions*
48. What was your position in the family? Oldest? Youngest?
49. What were your duties as a small child? Did you have chores?
50. Who cooked the meals? Ironing, cleaning, etc.?
51. Did you buy or make your own clothing?
52. When did you learn to cook and who taught you?
53. Did you ever learn to sew? Crochet? Knit? Embroider? And who taught you?
54. Did you ever learn the mechanics of a car and who taught you?
55. Did your family keep in touch with distant family? Do you still keep in touch?
56. Did you visit relatives often?
57. How did you get your mail?
58. What do you remember about family pets?
59. Were you especially close to anyone in the family? Who?
60. How did the family spend its evenings?
61. Did you get an allowance? How much? What did you spend it on?
62. Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics? What were some of the topics?
- Family income and livelihood*
63. What did your father do for a living?
64. Did your mother ever work outside of the home? What did she do?
65. Did you contribute to the family income? How?
66. When did you get your first job outside of the family?
67. Did your family have a garden? Who did the work on the garden? What kinds of vegetables did you grow?
68. Did your family have fruit trees? Who did the canning?
69. Did you raise chickens?
70. What kind of meat did you eat?
71. If you lived on a farm, what crops were planted? Who did the work? Family? Hired hands? Did you keep a cow for milk? Did you make your own butter and cheese? Did anyone in the family sell eggs or butter?
- Days, seasons, and special occasions*
72. What did Sunday mean to you (family dinner, etc.)?
73. Did you attend church on Sunday? Where did you attend church?
74. Were there any other special days of the week?
75. How did you spend Christmas?
76. What kinds of gifts did you receive at Christmas?
77. Did your family observe Easter?
78. How and where did you observe the Fourth of July?
79. Other special holidays?
80. How was your birthday celebrated? What kinds of gifts did you receive?
81. Did your family entertain often? When?
82. Did your family attend picnics? Family reunions? What do you remember about them?
83. How did you keep cool in the summer?
84. What did you wear in the winter to keep warm?
85. Do you remember any particular blizzards or tornadoes or floods?
- Friends and Games*
86. Did you have a favorite toy?
87. What were your favorite foods? What did you hate?

Interview Questions (cont.)

88. What did you do for recreation?
89. What kind of books did you read?
90. Did you or your brothers or sisters have any hobbies?
91. Who was your best friend?
92. What did you and your friends do when you got together?
93. Did you and your playmates play any organized games?
94. Did you ever learn to swim? Who taught you?
95. Did you participate in youth organizations?
96. What was the most mischievous thing you did as a youngster?
97. Whom did you admire most when you were young?
98. Has there ever been anyone in your life that you considered to be your “soul mate”? Who was it and why did you feel that way?

School

99. Where did you go to school? Did you ever attend a one-room schoolhouse?
100. What were your favorite subjects? Least-favorite?
101. Who was your favorite teacher, and why?
102. Do you still know anyone that you went to school with? In what grade did you meet?
103. How did you get to school? If you walked, how far? What do you remember about these walks? Did you walk alone or with friends? Were these walks a hardship in winter?
104. Did you ever miss a long stretch of school because of illness? If so, what did you do to pass the time?
105. What did you do during summer vacations?
106. In high school, were you involved in sports? What were some of the highlights?
107. Were you in the school band? What instrument(s)? Did you continue to play into adulthood?
108. What songs and dances were popular then?
109. What was some of the slang when you were a teenager?
110. What was your first date like? How old were you? What did you do?
111. What was your proudest achievement in school?

Transportation and surroundings

112. Describe the size of the town where you lived or shopped.
113. Where did your parents shop?
114. How large or small were the stores?
115. If you lived in a small town or on the farm, did you ever go into the city to shop?
116. What was the largest town you remember visiting when you were young?
117. Did you ever travel on a train while you were young?
118. Did you or your family own a horse and buggy?
119. When did your family acquire its first car? What make? How much did it cost?
120. When did you learn to drive a car? Did someone teach you?
121. Where did your family go on vacation?

Traditions

122. What family traditions are still practiced in your family?
123. Can you briefly tell one or more your family’s best stories or “tall tales”?
124. Do you recall any family members that were “characters”? What earned them their reputation?
125. What personal traits or characteristics seemed to “run in the family”?
126. What stories did you share with your children? Which ones didn’t you share?
127. Is there an enduring piece of advice or wisdom that’s been passed down from generation to generation in your family?

Higher Education and Career

128. How old were you when you left home? Where to and why did you leave? How did it feel to be on your own?
129. How many years of school did you attend? Did you study in your adult years?
130. What was your first job? Do you remember how much your pay was?
131. Who influenced you most and helped you to develop your skills?
132. What careers have you had? How long at each?

Interview Questions (cont.)

133. Would you choose the same career if you had it to do over?

Marriage and Later Life

134. When and where did you meet your husband or wife?

135. How and when did you get engaged? Who proposed? How long were you engaged?

136. When and where did you marry? How old were you and your spouse?

137. Did you go on a honeymoon? Where?

138. Where was your first home? Did you move around?

139. What is your spouse's occupation?

140. After living together for a time, what surprised you the most about your spouse?

141. How would you describe your spouse? What do you admire most about him/her?

142. What's your favorite story about your spouse?

143. Did you or your spouse go into military service?

144. If your spouse went into service, what did you do while he/she was away?

145. What memories do you have of war years?

146. To what organizations have you belonged?

147. Have you been politically active during your lifetime?

148. Which presidents have you voted for?

149. Where and when were your children born? What are their names?

150. Do any stories come to mind about their births?

151. What were some of the family hardships you faced?

152. What were some of the most enjoyable family activities you shared?

153. What were some of the family rules?

154. What's the most important lesson you hope your children learned from you?

155. What caused you to say "Just wait until you have children of your own!"?

Philosophy and Outlook

156. Do you have a philosophy of life to share with your descendants? What is it?

157. Do you have a favorite philosopher, teacher, or writer who best expresses your philosophy?

158. Do you have religious leanings or strong religious beliefs?

159. In your opinion, which have been the greatest advances or inventions during your lifetime?

160. What things have given you the most pleasure or satisfaction?

161. Is there anything that has caused you perpetual concern? What events or trends have disturbed you most in your lifetime?

162. What has been your experience in regard to the following? Answers to prayers? Necessity and power of love? Will power as opposed to being ruled by one's feelings?

163. What do you consider to be your most important achievements? What one thing are you most proud of?

164. What would you say is the funniest thing that's ever happened to you?

165. Most embarrassing?

166. What has been your favorite time of life?

167. Which person most influenced your life and why?

168. What kind of music do you like to listen to?

169. Did you travel? Which places were most interesting and why? Where did you never get to visit?

170. Have you ever made a sacrifice that's made a lasting impression on you?

171. What was your wisest decision?

172. What wasn't your wisest decision?

173. What makes your family truly unique?

174. What single piece of advice do you want to leave your children and grandchildren?

175. Any other things that are important to you?