



History, Memory, and Story

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PRE-INTERVIEW

- 1) Be prepared.
 - Know your purpose.
 - Have some background information so you can ask more informed questions.
 - Create an outline of topics and questions.
- 2) Communicate with your subject.
 - Agree on a probable length of the interview.
 - Get a signed release form.
- 3) Practice with your equipment

INTERVIEW

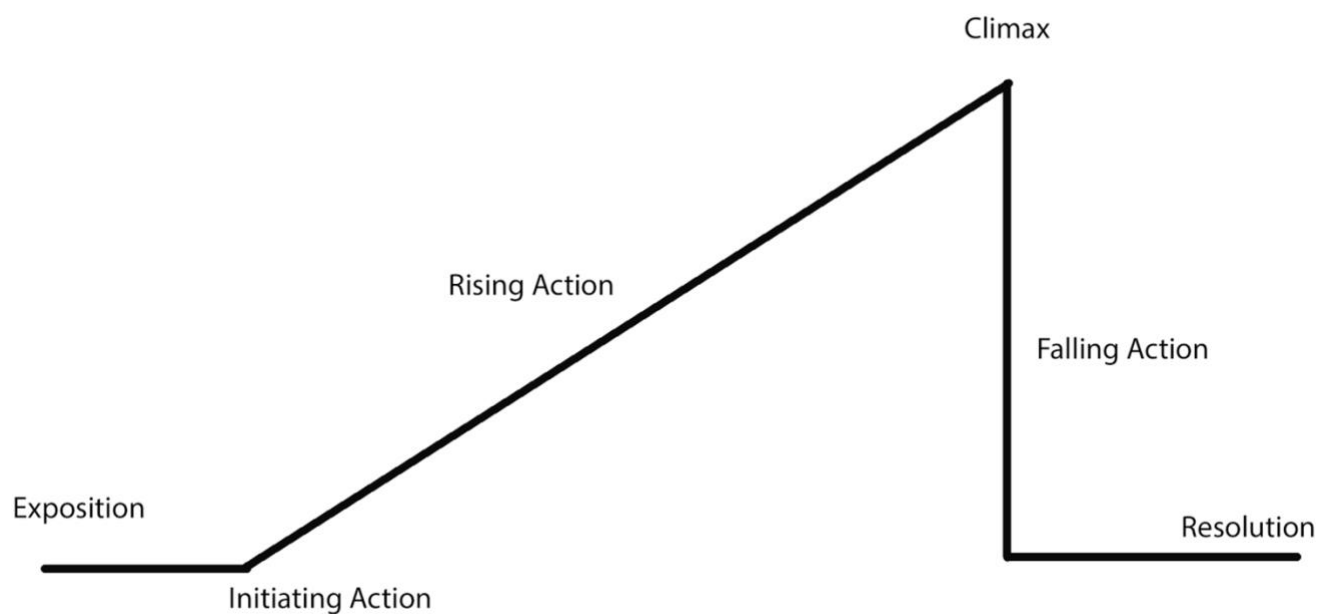
- 1) Make the room as quiet as possible.
- 2) Run a test recording first to check your recording levels.
- 3) Open with a “lead” – state the names of the interviewer and interviewee, date and year, location of the interview.
- 4) Take notes – get the spelling of names, jot down new questions.
- 5) Start with easier, factual questions.
- 6) Ask open-ended questions to invite reflection and further elaboration.
- 7) Listen carefully.
- 8) Give the subject time to pause and think.
- 9) Don’t be judgmental or let your own opinions show.
- 10) Be willing to go in another direction if the subject wants.
- 11) Respect the subject’s right to refuse to discuss certain topics or to stop at any time.
- 12) Use photographs, clothing, jewelry, documents, etc. to help jog memories.
- 13) You are responsible for gauging if the subject is getting tired.
- 14) At the end, ask the subject if there is anything else to add that you didn’t ask about.
- 15) Thank the subject

POST-INTERVIEW

- 1) If you wish, create a transcription.
- 2) If you wish, create an audio or video recording log.
- 3) If you are including photographs, get the permission of the people in the photos if you plan to donate them.
- 4) If you donate any part of the project to an institution, spell out what you are allowing the institution to do with the material.
- 5) You might want to interview others – family friends – for more information.

What is Freytag's Pyramid – 5 Steps of Story Structure

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-freytags-pyramid-definition/>



What is Story Structure? 8 Types You Should Know

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/writing-techniques/story-structure/>

Watch: Three Act Structure Explained (27:09 min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvqip1CxxD8&t=20s>

ORAL HISTORY RESOURCES

Akeret, Dr. Robert. **Family Tales, Family Wisdom; How to Gather the Stories of a Lifetime and Share Them With Your Family.** William Morrow, 1991.

A reminder of the wisdom and creative intelligence of our elders, and how we can collect their stories. Includes a description of the Elder Tale program, which uses photographs from youth and adult years, memories of a day in a life, turning points, high and low points, epiphanies and lessons, all moving toward creating the story of your life, creating telegrams and epitaphs, journeying to key places, asking questions you've never asked, and telling stories you've never told.

Davis, Donald. **Telling Your Own Stories; For Family and Classroom Storytelling, Public Speaking, and Personal Journaling.** August House, 1993.

Prompts that encourage your family members to share their stories, with guidance on what makes stories come to life – crisis, description, the story format, places, characters, the five languages of storytelling, and when to move into fiction.

Fletcher, William. **Recording Your Family History.** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1986.

Interview techniques and questions to ask, divided into three broad categories: life cycle events; historical events; and personal values and life philosophy.

Greene, Bob and D.G. Fulford. **To Our Children's Children; Preserving Family Histories for Generations to Come.** Doubleday, 1993.

Questions to ask your loved ones, divided into topics including: The House of Your Growing Up; Childhood/Neighborhood; Holidays and Celebrations; High School; College; Military Career; Entertainment; Romance and Relationships; Parenthood; The House You Raised Your Family In; Politics and History; Your Community; Everyday Life; Habits; Grandparenthood; Travels and Leisure Time; Moods, Attitudes, and Philosophies; Looking Back.

Hart, Cynthia with Lisa Samson. **The Oral History Workshop; Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends.** Workman Publishing, 2009.

Excellent advice on collecting family stories including preparing for the interview, handling secrets, recording and troubleshooting, interviewee anxieties, sample questions, specialized questions (immigrants, passionate travelers, living abroad, military service, athletes and sports events, animal lovers, food lovers and cooks, gardeners, collectors, artists, and activists), writing tips, scrapbooking, and archiving your interview.

*"When the old man died,
the shell was lost.
In time the shrine, too, disappeared.
All that remained was the story.*

*But that is how it is with all of us:
when we die, all that remains is the story."*

*Diane Wolkstein
White Wave*