

A person's story does not begin and end with the wartime experience and each person has a unique story to tell. *The suggestions below are not meant to limit the interviewer or the narrator, but rather are intended to guide the interview.*

Although each interview will be different, some standard information should be included at the beginning of each interview. Certain things should be asked for the record, to easily identify the tape, and to provide a graceful beginning to the interview. Many narrators (and interviewers) will be a little nervous to begin, and personal biographical questions provide a smooth start and necessary information.

Segment 1: Basic Biographical Information: (key points every interview should cover)

1. Full name (named for someone?)
2. When/where born
3. Parents' names and occupations
4. Where/when were parents born
5. Other family members (e.g., siblings, grandparents, others)

The Library of Congress provides these suggestions for questions:

Segment 2: Jogging Memory:

- Which war(s) did you serve in (WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf)?
- Were you drafted or did you enlist?
- When did you enter the service?
- Where were you living at the time?
- (If enlisted) Why did you join?
- Why did you pick the service branch you joined?
- Do you recall your first days in service?
- What did it feel like?
- Tell me about your boot camp/training experience(s).
- Do you remember your instructors?
- How did you get through it?

Try to keep the length of the interview within the amount of time promised, generally one hour. Wait until the first interview is complete before determining if there is a need for additional interviews.

Segment 3: Experiences: (try to develop chronology of service – what did you do, when, where)

- What outfit did you serve with? (Branch, unit)
- Where exactly did you go?
- Do you remember arriving and what it was like?
- What was your job/assignment?
- Did you see combat?
- Were there many casualties in your unit?
- Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.
- Were you a prisoner of war?
- Tell me about your experiences in captivity and when freed.
- Were you awarded any medals or citations?
- How did you get them?
- Higher ranks may be asked about battle planning. Those who sustained injuries may be asked about the circumstances.

Segment 4: Life: Ask questions about life in the service and/or at the front or under fire.

- How did you stay in touch with your family?
- What was the food like?
- Did you have plenty of supplies?
- Did you feel pressure or stress?
- Was there something special you did for "good luck"?
- How did people entertain themselves?
- Were there entertainers?
- What did you do when on leave?
- Where did you travel while in the service?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?
- What were some of the pranks that you or others would pull?
- Do you have photographs?
- Who are the people in the photographs?
- What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?
- Did you keep a personal diary?

Segment 5: After Service: Appropriateness of questions will vary if the veteran had a military career.

- Do you recall the day your service ended?
- Where were you?
- What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?
- How did the end of the war affect you?
- What was your homecoming like?
- Did you work or go back to school?
- Was your education supported by the G.I. Bill?
- Did you make any close friendships while in the service?
- Did you continue any of those relationships?
- For how long?
- Did you join a veterans organization?

Segment 6: Later Years and Closing:

- What did you go on to do as a career after the war?
- Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
- If in a veterans organization, what kinds of activities does your post or association have?
- Do you attend reunions?
- How did your service and experiences affect your life?
- Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?
- **Establish basic information when doing an interview.**
 - Dates or chronology: when did an event happen; did it happen before or after another event?
 - Spellings, particularly of persons' names, should be checked, either while recording or by making notes and checking after the interview. Clarify sound-alike names of either persons or places.
 - Visual items should be identified. If you are looking at a photograph or map that is key to the narration, number it and describe it in the interview so that anyone listening to the interview would understand what you were discussing.