

One of the joys of aging is sharing stories. For many older adults, stories are a connection to the past and a way to preserve memories for generations to come. Throughout the holidays or a new year's resolution are ideal times to capture and preserve the treasured stories of our loved ones. Here are a few tips to get you started in your journey as a family historian:

1. **Prepare and plan** - Consider the stories and memories you'd like to capture. Is there a story that family members ask your loved one to tell over and over? Would you like to know more about their life as a child? Are there some words of wisdom or a famous recipe that you would like to see passed on? Talk with your loved one to ensure they are comfortable with your plan. If a topic comes up that they are uncomfortable discussing, respect their wishes and move on.
2. **Gather supplies** - Determine how you would like to record your loved one's answers. Journals and scrapbooks are popular options. With the technology we have available to us today, you can also capture stories via audio, video, or both. In addition to your supplies to record and document, consider bringing out old family photos or heirlooms to help prompt memories.
3. **Document your questions** - Think about the questions you want to ask and how they will spark memories. Open-ended questions – questions that provide more than a yes or no answer – encourage storytelling.
4. **Get comfortable and chat!** - Capturing your loved one's stories is as simple as having a conversation. Perhaps ask grandchildren to get involved; children are naturally curious and love to ask questions.
5. **Gather other perspectives** - They say that there are two sides to every story. Consider capturing related comments, perspectives, and anecdotes from other family members to help enhance the stories shared from the older adults in your life.
6. **Backup, share and enjoy** - Once you've captured your loved one's stories, be sure to have multiple copies to share with other family members and enjoy them often.

There is no right or wrong way to have a conversation with a loved one, but you need to make the time to connect if you're going to preserve their stories. Start the new year by planning and engaging in meaningful conversations that everyone can enjoy for years to come.

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