

#MyArmenianStory Guidelines

What is #MyArmenianStory?

#MyArmenianStory is a USC Institute of Armenian Studies oral history project that collects Armenian life stories through crowd-sourced interviews. The purpose of the project is to record, gather, and document individual stories and reconstitute them as part of the national story. The idea is to discover and record family stories and more. Your mother, your aunt, your neighbor, your best friend – you can start anywhere. Everyone’s story is relevant, and together, they all make up the Armenian Story. You learn about your own story, while contributing knowledge about the Armenian Experience.

#MyArmenianStory will create a resource base that reflects the scope and depth of the Armenian experience for researchers.

- **Select an interviewee** whose story you want to know. The interviewee can be anyone - a relative or not, of any age, in any country, speaking any language.
- Together, **pick a time** that is good for both of you. Some interviews will be shorter, some longer. But start with a one-hour window. If you need to take breaks, you can. You can also do the interview in parts, on several different days.
- Decide if you will be **recording video or audio**. Video recording is preferable, but audio-only is also acceptable. If you choose video, determine if you will be recording in person or remotely via Zoom or Skype. Below you will find instructions for all scenarios.
- Spend a few minutes becoming familiar with the **questions**.
- The interview can be conducted in **any language or combination of languages**. For example, the questions can be asked in English and the answers provided in Armenian, or both the interviewer and the interviewee can switch between several languages.



General Guidelines

These are suggestions for the best possible outcome. If some of them cannot be followed for any reason, do not let that stop you from conducting the interview.

- The interview should take place in a quiet **room**. Make sure all windows are closed, and cell phones and alarms are turned off.
- Interviewee should sit on a non-swivel **chair**; sofas or couches are not ideal.
- Interviewee should not wear striped or sleeveless **clothing**.
- Sit **WITHOUT** a **light source** behind the interviewee (i.e. the interviewee should not sit with his back to a window, instead he or she should sit facing the window). This way the subject is well lit.
- If using a light source, place light as shown in diagram (SEE PHOTO BELOW).
- Interviewee should **look** at the interviewer, not the camera, and it's best if the interviewer is sitting right alongside the camera.
- Conduct a **test** (record one minute) before starting the actual recording.
- Interviewee and interviewer should speak clearly in everyday voices.
- Use questions as prompts and **let the interviewee talk** instead of reciting questions word for word or reading several questions back to back. If the interviewee gets ahead of the questions, don't worry. Let them tell their story. You can always come back and ask other questions.
- Treat the interview like a **conversation**; if you're interrupted (by loud noises, coughing, or internet related lagging or delays), just say you were interrupted, and continue. Don't worry about editing the recording. Interruptions are normal.
- Even if some questions seem **sensitive**, consider asking them anyway. Interviewees appreciate the opportunity to share. No one may have asked them these questions and often, they are eager to share. It's a form of release. If they don't want to answer, they won't.
- If the interviewee gets **emotional**, don't stop, don't interrupt, just give them time, leave the camera on, and continue when they're ready.
- The interviewer should be careful not to say 'mmm' or 'uhuh' in response to the interviewee's answers. Just nod or smile.
- If the interviewee wants to share or give a document, photograph, or any other kind of written or visual material, either scan and email it to the Institute or request a prepaid fedex envelope and mail it to the Institute. These are valuable and welcome.

Guidelines for **In-Person Interviews** (in the same room):

- Only the interviewee needs to be **visible on camera**.
- Prop the recording device on a stable surface and/or use a tripod; make sure the phone is in a horizontal position, and the microphone is not blocked.
- Recording device should be at **eye-level** with the interviewee. As you frame the shot, make sure you leave space above the interviewee's head and on both sides. The face shouldn't fill up the shot. SEE PHOTO BELOW for suggestions.
- Sit near each other, close enough to the phone (or camera) so that you capture clear audio, but the camera should be **focused on the interviewee**.
- See last page of this document for **diagram**.

Guidelines for **Remote Recording** via Zoom or Skype.

- Interviewer and interviewee should place the phone or computer on a **stable surface**.
- The phone or computer camera should be at **eye-level** with the interviewee. As you frame the shot, make sure you leave space above the interviewee's head and on both sides. The face shouldn't fill up the shot. SEE PHOTO BELOW for suggestions.
- Only the interviewee needs to be visible on camera.
- The interviewee should not sit with their back to a window or with any light source behind them. Instead they should sit facing the window. This will ensure that the subject is **well-lit**.
- Ask and answer questions by looking **directly at the camera**.

Conducting the Interview

- Begin the interview by stating the date.
- Introduce yourself and your location.
- Introduce the interviewee and the interviewee's location.
- Tell the interviewee that you will be asking questions about their life and then continue with the suggested questions. These questions are important and can serve as a guide; most importantly, dive further with follow-up questions based on their answers.
- At the end of the interview, allow 10 seconds of silence before ending the recording.

Labeling Interview Recording

The video (or audio) file should have the interviewee's name as file name, in the format below. No punctuation necessary.

- Last name first name myarmenianstory
- For example, if you interviewed Aram Adamian, the label should read as follows: Adamian Aram myarmenianstory.

If the interview is conducted in multiple parts, label as below:

- Last name first name myarmenianstory 1
- Last name first name myarmenianstory 2

Uploading Interview

Follow link to USC Institute of Armenian Studies depository:
<http://www.armenian.usc.edu/myarmenianstory>

This link will take participants to a page that will request:

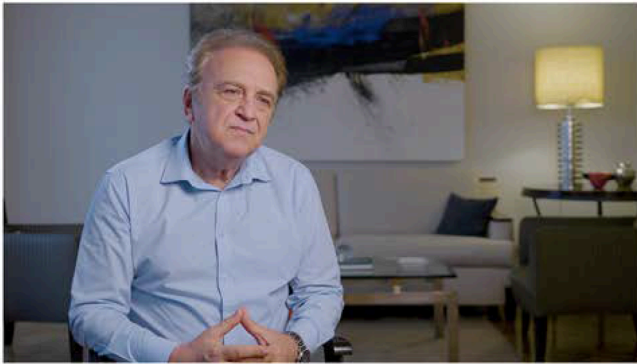
Name of interviewer
Birth date
Birth place
Date of Interview
Location of Interviewer

Name of interviewee
Birth date
Birth place
Date of Interview
Location of Interviewee

Permissions

By providing the information above and by uploading the interview, the interviewer is confirming that both interviewer and interviewee are giving permission for the recording to become part of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies research collection, available to researchers, students, filmmakers, and scholars.

SAMPLE SHOT



HOW TO SET UP INTERVIEWEE, INTERVIEWER, CAMERA AND LIGHT SOURCE

