

Collecting Family Stories and Folklore-- Questions to Ask

Origins

- How did our family come to be where it is today? Did you live in other places? What other places did our parents, grandparents or great-grandparents live?
- Do you know any stories of how your parents or grandparents came to America? Where did they settle first? What should I know about them?
- What languages did they speak? Do you speak that language too?

Personal History

- Where were you born? Where were your parents and grandparents born? What years?
- Can you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
- What family, friends or teachers were especially important to you when you growing up?
- What Jewish memories do you have as a child?
- Who is the oldest relative you remember? Can you tell me about them?
- What advice or training did your grandparents, an older relative or your parents give you that you remember best? What example did they set?
- Who are you closest to in your family? Can you tell me a special experience you had with them?
- What do you remember about the school you went to as a child? Did you receive a Jewish education?
- What kind of work did you do as an adult? How did you learn this type of work?
- How did you meet ----- and get married?
- What you most proud of in your life?

Family Folklore

- Are there any stories about the origins of our family name?
- Are there any sayings or jokes that are you like to tell?
- Are there songs you grew up singing or your parents or grandparents sang to you? In what language did they sing?

Traditions

- What aspects of Jewish life were most important in your family?
- What were the most important Jewish holidays you celebrated or observed in your house? Describe what was special about the way your family observed the holiday?
- What family heirlooms (meaningful objects that have been passed down through the generations) are important to you? Why? Who gave it you and where did it come from?

