



Ten Tips for Getting Started on a Veterans Oral History Project

By Paul LaRue

1. Visit the Library of Congress Veterans History Project website: www.loc.gov/vets/.
 - a. This website includes all of the background information and materials necessary to have the oral histories you record entered into the Library of Congress system
 - b. Visit www.loc.gov/vets/kitmenu.html for all necessary forms for submitting to the Veterans History Project
2. Get a tape recorder.
 - a. Tip: the "shoebox" tape recorder is much sturdier than others, and it is likely that your school may have a few lying around. Digital tape recorders are another great option
3. Prepare a script of questions (use above link to Library of Congress website).
 - a. Sample questions are also available at: www.history.com/minisites/veterans/images/veteransorahistory.pdf
 - b. Teachers will want to remind students of appropriate and inappropriate questions before they start their interviews
4. Contact local veterans organizations (ex. American Legion or Veterans of Foreign War) to find a list of veterans to interview, or ask a family member or friend with military experience if they would be willing to be interviewed.
 - a. Select a "friendly or familiar face" to interview first to ensure a positive experience while students are still learning
5. Digitize your tape once the interview is complete (if your tape breaks you will have the audio file for back-up).
 - a. Sample: PolderbitS Software
 - b. A digital recorder allows you to put the recording directly on the computer, and to make copies easily
6. Transcribe the tape.
 - a. Rewind and Stop buttons make it easier to listen to a cassette tape than a CD. This may take a very long time – stopping, rewinding and replaying for greater understanding can take up to 20 hours
 - b. While transcribing, Google any names you cannot understand, or places that you are not familiar with. This will help ensure a correct document. Verify name spellings before submitting to Library of Congress or finalizing them
 - c. Write on notebook paper first and save all of these drafts. Multiple drafts can be useful
7. Type the written document and save the file. Try to establish a standard format to use on all transcripts.
8. If possible have the veteran look over transcript or ask the veteran or a family member or friend to only correct names and places, not to rewrite the document.
9. When transcription is complete, follow the Library of Congress guidelines for submission (see link below).
www.loc.gov/vets/ mailingaddress.html
10. Resources:
 - a. The History™ Take a Veteran to School Day site at www.veterans.com has additional tips and resources for this project.
 - b. Visit www.saveourhistory.com for the "Saluting Local Heros" How-to guide located under teacher resources. This is a good resource for conducting an actual interview.

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