

19|47  
A R C H I V E

**Citizen Historian Training  
Packet**

(October 2015 Version)

## 1. Know before the interview

(A summary of the information suggested below will soon be available in our Partition Basics Reference Packet)

- Map of South Asia.** Know where the most heavily affected areas are: Bengal, Punjab (both parts of 1947 Punjab), Sindh, Jammu, Kashmir, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Balochistan, Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Assam. Know the names of major cities. You are encouraged to research this further.
- Princely states.** Know the main Princely states and where they are on the map. Know the religious composition/demographics and inter-religion dynamics. If the interviewee is from a Princely state, they can provide a fascinating glimpse into life within the kingdom and how it changed after Partition, as well as details about the royal families, court, administration, royal armies and the relation between British territories and Kingdom. Some reference maps are included online.
- A bit about the culture.** Learn about South Asian etiquette and cultural norms. Learn about the various ethnicities, castes, religions and professions, and the dynamics between various groups. Such group identities and dynamics played a role in the Partition experience.
- A general history of Partition.** You should have a general idea of what happened and the key political figures involved. These names and events may come up during the interview. It will also make you better prepared in asking probing and important questions.

**Suggestion:** BBC Documentary on Partition ‘The Day India Burned’ (available in 9 parts on YouTube)

Link - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQcMPbHfxaA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQcMPbHfxaA)

**Suggestion:** See Partition Booklist on our website

Link - [www.1947PartitionArchive.org/Library](http://www.1947PartitionArchive.org/Library)

- Know why you are doing this.** Make sure you have this well defined for yourself as you will be asked this question a lot. Why do you think archiving these interviews and personal stories is important? Why is it important to you in particular? Why in general? Only you can answer this for yourself.

## 2. Interview documents and submission portal

Once you have successfully completed the Oral History Workshop offered by The 1947 Partition Archive, **you will gain access** to the Oral History Document Library and the Story Submission Portal. Below is a list of documents you will need to conduct and submit your interview and instructions on how to access them.

- Begin by logging into <http://www.1947PartitionArchive.org>
- After logging in, mouse-over the “Share Your Story” drop-down menu item and click on “Oral History Documents.” The document library contains links to:
  - Citizen Historian Training Packet
  - Field Instruction Packet with migrant questionnaire
  - Field Instruction Packet with non-migrant questionnaire
  - Post Interview Form
  - Oral History Release Form
  - and other resources
- After you have recorded your story, you are ready to submit your interview video/audio files and documents online at The Archive’s website. In order to submit your interview files, access the submission portal online by logging in and then hovering over the “Share A Story” tab, and selecting “Upload Files.” A completed interview submission includes four items:
  - Video and/or audio files of the interview
  - Post Interview Form, filled out digitally (not by hand)
  - Release form, signed and scanned
  - At least 5 photograph/still images of the interview session
  - OPTIONAL: documents such as old historical photographs, etc.

### 3. Pre-interview Phone Call

*This guideline is developed for those trying to reach prospective interviewees for the first time over the telephone to schedule an interview. It should take about 10 minutes. Try very hard to make sure the interviewee's story does not spill out on the phone. It may not emerge as organically the second time around when you visit them in person! Before you call them, know the times and dates you are available. Also, the interviewee, who is elderly, may be hard of hearing. Please be cognizant and understanding of this and **exercise extreme patience when communicating with them over the phone.***

- Begin by telling them that you are calling about The 1947 Partition Archive. You can introduce yourself and tell them that you are a Citizen Historian volunteer and/or Story Scholar and/or Oral History Apprentice for The 1947 Partition Archive. Tell them about the organization. If they signed up with The Archive to share their story, you can also remind them where they signed up and who talked to them when they signed up, if you have this information.

- Next, tell them about the interview process:

*Example: "We will be asking you questions about your personal experiences (jo tussi akhi dekhyā [Punjabi]). We will cover every part of your life. We'll first ask you about your childhood, what life was like where you lived before Partition, what you did for fun, the festivals and customs, etc. Then we'll ask you about your Partition experience, what you saw, heard and what you remember. Finally we'll ask you about how life changed after Partition and how you got to where you are today. This is a video interview."*

**Stress that it is about personal experiences** (i.e. it is NOT a quiz on Partition or the politics surrounding this event).

Often times witnesses might feel that they are not educated enough, or that they did not see any violence or migration. Remind them that is perfectly alright and that you want to record whatever they saw with their own eyes, whatever was happening around them. They DO NOT have to be a migrant.

- Ask them when they might be available. Find a time in common with

**Video Interview Instructions**

your availability and suggest this. Note: DO NOT impose your availability on them. Let them dictate when they are available first and then try to find a time in common with your availability.

- Next, tell them that you have a few suggestions that will help them prepare for the interview:

*\*\*Ask them to set aside about three hours for the interview (you should set aside more time to account for travel, but it may take a longer. It is not uncommon for interviews to require multiple sessions on separate days, which will only become apparent once the interview has begun).*

*\*\*Let them know that the interview will need to take place in a private and quiet space. (A place where there are no kitchen noises, or other people talking. No traffic or outside noises. Ideally, the interviewee should be the only one in the room.)*

*\*\*Ask if they have old photographs to share and ask them to keep them ready.*

**Note:** They may ask you where these interviews are going to be stored and what you are going to do with them. You can remind them that with their permission, the interviews will be stored in a digital cloud (that is located in no particular country) and in the future, in our partner libraries. Further, with their permission, interview clips will be posted on our website and other social media sites. **They will be used as an educational tool for future generations. Otherwise the memory of Partition will be lost.**

**Note:** They may also ask why you are doing this and what the point is of doing this. Be honest and tell them your personal beliefs on this! Why do you think this is important? What is the point? **Be prepared to answer this before you call anyone.**

## 4. Video interview procedures

Partly adapted from: <http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2008/how-to-shoot-video-interviews/>



*Divide your camera screen in three equal halves, with imaginary lines going down the screen. Center the interviewee's face on one of the lines. Make sure their face is looking toward the white space.*

1. When you first go into your interviewee's home, spend some time getting to know them and explaining the interview procedure in detail. Get comfortable talking with the person *before* you set up all the camera gear. Make a human connection. Let the person see that you care about him or her. Are you nervous? The other person might be MORE nervous. Your interviewee is valuable to you. Show it. (Sample ice-breakers: Talk about their house, find something in common, ask how they are doing, ask about their family and children, tell them a bit about yourself and why you are here/what you will do.)
2. As you are setting up the equipment, don't make the person sit or stand in place until you're almost ready.
3. After the person is in place, use the LCD viewfinder and make sure you like where the subject is looking. The person will want to look at you, and that is

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good. Do not sit/stand directly behind the camera, but do sit/stand close beside it. *Divide your camera screen in three equal portions, with imaginary lines going down the screen. Center the interviewee's face on one of the lines. Make sure their face is looking toward the side of the camera away from the interviewee's face. See illustration above. Make sure the top of the interviewee's head just barely touches the top of your viewfinder screen. Avoid keeping a gap between the top of their head and the viewfinder screen.*

4. **GET CLOSE.** Get close enough to show at least your subject's head and torso. A closer zoom is also possible, but avoid zooming out too far. It's important to capture the interviewee's facial expressions and emotions.
5. Pay attention to the **BACKGROUND.** Avoid poles or trees coming out of heads, or wall hangings, switch boards, wall clocks. Look out for distracting items or action behind the person. The background has to be minimalistic. Try and have the person seated against the backdrop of a blank wall, if possible.
6. **Pay close attention to the light!** Avoid direct sunlight. If you must be in the sun, avoid causing the interviewee to squint, but also make sure the sun is not behind the person. In a home, you may need to move the lights. You might even ask for a desk lamp to counteract a strong light on one side of the room.
7. **WEAR your HEADPHONES!** All kinds of noise might come along and ruin your audio, and in many cases, you will not notice if you are not monitoring it.
8. **Sit adjacent to the camera, not behind the camera.** This way, the interviewee will not be looking directly into the camera but at you. It will appear more natural.

## 5. Oral history interview etiquette

### A. In consideration of the interviewee's comfort...

1. Do not interrupt--ever. Always let them finish what they are saying, even if they are going off track. Gently change the subject back when they are finished completing their thought.
2. If you are with a partner, DO NOT talk amongst yourselves, except about technical issues. Otherwise, extensive conversation with your partner could appear rude and you may lose credibility. The interviewee must remain at the center of your focus at all times.
3. SPEAK UP! Your interviewee may be hard of hearing.
4. Keep feedback non-vocal. Be conscious of the sounds YOU are making. Avoid making sounds such as “uh-huh” or “hmm.” Quietly nod to acknowledge what they say. Otherwise it will sound awkward in the recording. Prior to the interview, inform the interviewee that you will nod and not give verbal feedback.
5. An assisted narration. Think of the interview as an “assisted narration.” Remember, they must do 90% of the talking.
6. Questions you are asked: If they ask you a personal question during the interview, you may give a brief answer or tell them you’ll answer later. Move on quickly and keep focused on their story.
7. Be extremely respectful. Let the person see that you care about him or her. Your interviewee is valuable to you. Show it. You are taking their time. They are helping us discover and record history. Treat them with the utmost respect. **Honor them as you would the most respectable people you know, regardless of your own personal judgment.** They are from a different time and may have very different perspectives than yourself. Honor and respect this. Do not jump to quick judgment. Do not be reactive when they express strong views that differ from your own. This is THEIR MOMENT. Let them have it and allow them to say what is on their mind.
8. They don't have to answer. If they appear to hesitate to respond to a question, start by being patient and give them the time they need to respond. If they express discomfort in answering the question and prefer to not respond, affirm that it is ok and they do not have to answer. If they would rather not answer, any question can be skipped and dismissed. NEVER ASSUME that they don't want to answer. Wait for them to express this explicitly.



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9. When things get emotionally difficult, focus on strengths. When the interviewee is recalling tough memories of personal loss, be sensitive, listen carefully and begin asking questions that focus on strength. The fact that they made it through this tough experience is incredible. Help them see this and help them focus on their strengths. Ask questions such as, “How did you manage to get through that? How did you cope?” **DO NOT PANIC. KEEP RECORDING**, unless they specifically ask to have the camera turned off. Capturing their raw emotion is part of recording history.

### B. Related to the content of your questions...

1. Think of the interview as an assisted narration. It is a conversation in which you minimize your own involvement. The interviewee should dominate the conversation. Your job is to simply help them with recollection or in bringing out key parts of their story, using questions. To help you, imagine you are painting a picture or writing a play. What details would you need from their story, from the particular scene they are describing?
2. Listen carefully. You will be able to formulate more relevant and probing questions. Most likely, they can tell when you are not listening!
3. Start by knowing the interview questions. The interview is not the time to discover the contents of the migrant and non-migrant questionnaires, or the basics of your interviewee’s back ground (are they a migrant or non-migrant?). You should already know that before you enter the room for the interview. The best way to prepare is to review the interview questionnaire before hand. A genuine curiosity on your part will go a long way. This way you can avoid long awkward pauses and avoid “running out” of questions. There are an infinite number of things to ask!
4. Ask open ended questions. Do not ask questions with “yes” or “no” answers. **Ask the question in such a way that the interviewee has to explain the answer in details.** Example: Don’t say, “The migration was bad, wasn’t it?” Instead say, “What do you think about the migration?”
5. Make it a challenge to learn something new from every interview! Ask probing questions. Listen attentively.
6. Note that village and city life differed starkly. For example, some cites had institutions like cinemas, while others were extremely rural. Frame your questions accordingly, since the interview questionnaire is more general. Try to paint a multi-perspective image in your head about their lifestyle. For instance, discuss their mode of income, their clothing customs, food, house and home life, social dynamics, markets, festivals, inter-gender dynamics,

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economic situation, law and order, modes of transportation, religious places, education system, etc.

7. Make sure to ask details about their migration path. Where did they cross the border and through which towns did they travel? Where did they go after crossing as refugees and how did they eventually end up where they are today? You should write this down during the interview and fill it out in the post-interview form. This is important for migration analysis, which you can see in part in the “Story Map” on the homepage of the website.

**C. In order to record efficiently and collect a quality video...**

1. Use a signal when you wish to take a break: Discuss a “break” hand signal with your interviewee. Use this if your battery/memory is ending, or if you need a break for some reason (i.e. interviewee needs a break or something else comes up).
2. Allow pauses--they can be powerful. Let them think... if they are taking time to answer your questions, let them take the time. The long silence, though seemingly awkward, can be a good thing. Give them plenty of time to respond. Just because they are quiet doesn't mean they don't have anything to say... they might be trying to recall details. If you observe them carefully you can usually tell if they have more to say.
3. Other people. If there are other observers and people in the room, avoid eye contact with them, as this usually tempts them to speak up and interrupt the interview. It is best to NOT engage anyone other than the interviewee. Make this clear to everyone before the interview.

**D. To avoid technical problems...**

1. Keep the camera on. We want to record everything, including their emotions and silences. Do not panic and turn it off during emotional moments. Turn off the camera only if they specifically request it.
2. Battery Life: The CAMERA PERSON (who could also be the interviewer) should keep an eye on this.
3. Sound: The CAMERA PERSON should notify the interviewer and interviewee if there are extraneous sounds that need to be addressed. DON'T BE SHY.

## 6. Twitter Guide (@1947Partition)

*We highly encourage tweeting! The interview you are conducting is an excellent opportunity to share your incredible experience, spread the knowledge of Partition, and inspire others to record stories in their community - by sharing your experience live on social media. You can engage a global audience in bringing attention to Partition, as well as inspire others to join the effort to preserve stories before they are lost. **The one, very valuable story you are capturing could lead to the preservation of countless more - all through social media.***

### What to tweet:

- Interesting quotes from the interview
- Photos of the interview in process
- Photo with interviewee and interviewer
- Use hashtags! Ex: city of interview, #1947CitizenHistorian, #1947Partition
- **Be sure to tag The Archive and we will retweet: @1947Partition**
- Tag other tweeters: yourself, cameraperson, family members of interviewee, others
- Insert link to how to become a Citizen Historian, [http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/collect\\_stories](http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/collect_stories)

### When to tweet:

- Tweet on the way to the interview.
- Tweet after the interview.
- Tweet during a break.
- Take notes of interesting quotes during the interview to help you tweet later.
- (NEVER tweet during the interview.)

### Who should tweet:

- Interviewer
- Cameraperson
- Others listening to the story
- Interviewee and their family

## 7. Free License Policy

**Archive Use/License:** The 1947 Partition Archive may make the interview you conducted available **for use** to (1) academic researchers and (2) verified educational media makers (including but not limited to documentary filmmakers, historians, authors and artists). Remember that The 1947 Partition Archive is non-profit and **thus NEVER** makes a profit. It is funded entirely by public donations. Because it costs a lot of resources to preserve and archive the interview you conducted, we may charge a fee to media makers who would like to license any portion of the interview you have conducted to cover The Archive's basic costs. Any proceeds from licensing fees are used exactly the same way as donations are, to fund the preservation and dissemination of the interview you conducted into perpetuity in order to continue educating the public on Partition.

**License to the interviewer and interviewee:** A free license is available to interviewers and interviewees, to use the interview for educational and research purposes. However, in order to maintain the highest ethical standards and to protect the interviewee, upon submission of an interview The 1947 Partition Archive (The Archive) requires that the interviewer and/or interviewee obtain **explicit written permission** from The Archive prior to licensing the interview video/audio (other than non-public sharing with family and friends of interviewee). The video/audio license is available at no cost to the interviewer and interviewee if the video/audio are used both, (1) in accordance with The Archive's Ethical Use Policy and (2) in accordance with the interviewee's preferences. The use must be non-commercial, non-promotional, non-sectarian, not support any agendas by other groups/organizations and purely for the purpose of public education.

**Three year embargo:** The Archive will observe a three year embargo on sharing oral histories with the public. This embargo is crucial in ensuring and maintaining the highest possible level of integrity of the witness accounts that are recorded. We strive to ensure that witness accounts remain unquestionably authentic with the minimal possible influence from others' accounts and views. Secondly, an immense amount of resources are required to bring the accounts to the public. The Archive is a young organization in the process of gathering the resources and finances needed create a public venue for your stories.

## 8. Interview Supplements

*In addition to the recorded video interview, we ask that each interviewer submit at least **5 still photographs**, 5-10 minutes of “**B-roll**” footage, as well as scans or photographs of any additional **documents**, including **old heirloom photographs** that the interviewee would like to accompany their interview.*

### A. Still Photographs **required**

Take at least 5 photographs of the interviewee with a digital camera. Images can be as simple or as artistic as you like. They can include the interviewee alone, the interviewee and the interviewer speaking with one another, the interviewee speaking in front of the camera, the interviewee looking at a photograph of themselves at a younger age. Please make sure that the pictures are taken at a flattering angle and in a well-lit area. If the interviewee’s story is shared on social media (in accordance with their preferences), one of these pictures will accompany the story. Please make sure that the images are sharp and in focus. You are encouraged to share the stories with your interviewee first, for their approval, prior to submission.

### B. B-roll Footage **required**

We ask that you capture 5-10 minutes of B-roll footage. B-roll footage includes all footage other than the footage of the interviewee speaking. The goal is to capture video of scenes/items that are illustrative of the setting and the interviewee’s daily realities. B-roll footage could include scenes of the interviewee doing something they love to do (reading, making a pot of tea, speaking with a grandchild), the view from the interviewee’s window, old family photographs hung throughout the home, a beloved object, close ups of the interviewee’s hands or eyes, the busy street outside, or nearby agricultural fields for example. Be as creative as you like and feel free to ask the interviewee for suggestions.

*Partly adapted from: <http://blog.filmerz.com/directing/?target=606>*

### C. Additional Documents and old photographs **highly recommended**

Ask the interviewer if they would like copies of any documents they may have to be kept with their interview file (old photographs, historic maps, newspaper clippings, letters, drawings, floor plans, etc.) You can either scan these documents or photograph them using the ‘macro’ setting on your digital camera. *(Note: If you photograph them, please make sure you capture the image from directly above the document and not at an angle. Also make sure that the image is sharp, in focus, and that the lighting is adequate.)*

## 9. Materials Submission

*The following is a list of materials you will be submitting with the interview. Detailed instructions on submitting your interview online can be found in the individual interview packets. See Section 2 for more details.*

- Interview movie files and b-roll footage. **required**
- Post interview questionnaire completed electronically and submitted digitally, along with the interview summary written and submitted digitally. **required**
- Release form printed on paper and completely filled out. **required**
- At least five photos taken during interview. **required**
- Other scanned older photos and documents. **highly recommended**