

MyArmenianStory FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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.

What is the suggested length of an interview?

Interviews as short as 45 minutes are fine, but many interviews are closer to two hours. Interviews of all lengths will be accepted into the collection.

Can interviews be conducted in a language other than English?

Yes. The interview can even be in several languages. The interviewer and interviewee should speak in whatever language they feel comfortable and can switch between languages whenever they please.

If the interview is not in English or transitions between various languages, do I need to translate it?

No. There is no need to worry about translating any portion of the interview. Interviews in any language or any combination of languages will be accepted.

Does the interviewee or interviewer have to be Armenian?

No. There are no restrictions. Anyone with an Armenian story can be an interviewer or an interviewee for #MyArmenianStory.

Does the interviewee have to be a family member or relative?

You can interview anyone whose story you want to know, or think should be recorded for posterity. Anyone. The advantage of interviewing family members or relatives is that you find out more about your own story.



Does the person being interviewed have to be well-known.

No. The person simply needs to consent to sharing their experiences and stories. Everyone's memories of childhood, of immigration or memories of parents or grandparents immigration, growing up in a community are valuable.

Is this project only for people who were born in the Diaspora?

No. This project is intended to gather everyone's story -- those who were born in the Diaspora AND those who grew up in Soviet Armenia, AND those who repatriated to Soviet Armenia, as well as those who now live in the Republic of Armenia.

What happens if I want to interview someone who thinks they don't have anything interesting to say?

If you encounter an interviewee who may be hesitant, you may suggest they start with showing an object that is a reminder of an episode in their life, significant or insignificant, maybe carried across generations, or from country to country. It can be a book, a journal, a photo, a keepsake that sparks a feeling, a connection or revives a sentiment. This may get them started and then you can return to the question guide.

Is there an age restriction?

Anyone 18 years of age or older can be interviewed. It might be more interesting and useful to interview someone who has lived a variety of experiences and is self-aware and can share their memories

Do interviews have to be conducted in person?

Interviews can be conducted in person or through platforms such as Zoom or Skype. Full instructions about recording interviews can be found attached in the Guidelines.

How are interviews submitted?

Visit Armenian.usc.edu/myarmenianstory.

What is the difference between the short and extended question guides?

They both cover the same material. The extended guide offers more specific and follow-up questions. Use whichever you're more comfortable with, or mix parts of both. Most importantly, follow the interviewee's lead in deciding which questions and topics are most applicable and relevant.

If I choose to use the extended guide, can I leave some of the questions out or skip around?

You can use either guide in any way that works for your interview. The extended question guide includes prompts and questions for all kinds of potential backgrounds. Select those questions which are relevant for your interviewee.

Can the interviewer direct the conversation to issues not covered in the question guide and disregard parts of it altogether?

Yes. The interviewer should follow the interviewee's lead in selecting the appropriate questions and topics to pursue. If certain questions are not applicable, they can be skipped. If new topics or themes come up that are not covered in the guides, the interviewer can ask their own questions and follow up.

I have never interviewed anyone. Am I qualified to do this?

An interview is really like a long and deep conversation. All it takes is someone who is interested. With your curiosity and our instructions, you'll be ready to conduct your first interview. The interview guide contains a list of questions and areas that can be covered.

Who will own the rights to the interview once I submit my video?

The University of Southern California Institute of Armenian Studies will have the right to the video that will become part of the university's archives, available to researchers. But you will own the rights to the recording that you have made. Make sure to keep a copy of the interview for yourself and your family because it might take a long time and there may be complicated procedures to ask for a copy later on.

What should I do if the interview is interrupted?

Interruptions are part of the process. If the interruption is brief and does not disrupt the recording, simply carry on with the interview. If the recording is turned off, continue with a new recording and make sure to label both accurately. See labeling instructions in the Guidelines.

What should I do if the interviewee gets emotional?

It is quite normal for people to get emotional while remembering significant moments from their life history. Allow them some time to regain their composure and continue with the interview. You do not need to stop the recording.

What should I do if the interviewee offers to share a document, photo, or other memento?

Documents, photos, or other mementos are welcome because they help contextualize the interview and provide visual and material elements. Either scan or photograph the item and email it to the Institute or request a prepaid Fedex envelope and mail it.

What if the interview is cut short for some reason and I am unable to complete it? Can I submit a partial interview?

Yes. Check the Guidelines document on how to label a multi-part interview. But where possible, try to complete it. Perhaps on another day?

Can a third person join the interview? What if another family member interrupts with their input or challenges the interviewee's recollection?

It would be best if the family member is asked to wait and you conduct an interview with that person as well. Everyone's story is valuable. But bringing two people into the camera frame is difficult and two people speaking will create a confusing soundtrack. This can be done either by stopping the recording, or during the recording.

What does USC plan to do with my interview?

The USC Institute of Armenian Studies will collect, catalogue, and digitally archive the interviews, making them available as primary source material upon researchers' request.

Where will the collection of interviews be housed?

The collection will be housed in the University of Southern California Institute of Armenian Studies digital archives.

Will the recordings be publicly accessible online? Who and how might be able to see my interview?

The recordings will be made available to those who request access to these digital archives. They will not be publicly available on the Internet.

Are there consent forms that interviewees need to sign?

The interviewee will give verbal consent during the interview. In addition, the interviewer will confirm consent as part of the online submission process.

Can an interviewer conduct and submit multiple interviews with different people?

Yes.