



KWVDM Interview Toolkit

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www.kwvdm.org

Thank you for taking part in the Korean War Veterans Digital Memorial Project. We look forward to seeing all the amazing interviews and photos that veterans will submit with your help.

In this toolkit, we would like to offer a model and resources so you can set up your own interview day at your school or local library. We feel that the best way to bring the Korean War to life is to listen to the veterans and their stories. You will be contributing to a lasting legacy in a time when involvement is the most critical.

Planning Your Interview Day

This will be a time commitment. Volunteers will need to be organized. The veterans and other community members will need to be given enough notice. Equipment and interview spaces will need to be secured. So, let's get started!

Create a Team

To be successful, you will need a support group. Consider dividing responsibilities as such:

Leaders

These should be your core group of responsible members who you can trust to lead on large sections of the planning. This is a great opportunity for adults and young adults alike to play to their strengths and grow in their fields. Seek out future/current marketers, IT hopefuls, and potential journalists. These roles give students and young adults real leadership and work experience. Adults who are already versed in these fields can serve as leaders or mentors throughout the project as well.

Set expectations early and often. Leaders should know how much time they must commit. As a team, set long and short-range goals for each leader.

Potential jobs for leaders:

- Creating recording spaces within the school/library
- Creating a schedule and map for veterans
- Recruiting volunteers
- Outreach to veterans in the community
- Seeking out donations from community for equipment (if needed)
- Organizing the volunteers who will be directing veterans throughout the day
- Organizing the volunteers who will be interviewing or moderating interviews.
- Securing and organizing the equipment
- Training volunteers on how to use the equipment
- Training and organizing volunteers who will be cataloging the interviews and artifacts.

* It is worth noting that leaders can conduct interviews in addition to their other responsibilities.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the keystone of your project. As you may have noticed from the list above, you will need many hands on deck to get the job done. If you are working within a school, see if your counselor has a community service club or organization. If not, consider these other options:

- public and community radio stations
- college programs
- clubs
- service organizations
- civic and religious organizations
- local oral history projects

Mapping Out Your Interview Site

Decide on your Interview Style

There are two major interview styles: interviewing an individual, or moderating an interview done between friends and family members. Either model works well, as long as the veteran feels respected. You can choose to only set up interviews between a volunteer and a veteran, or you can give family and friends the option to serve as the interviewer. Once you have decided, make sure to include this information when advertising to veterans. We suggest that you have either an interviewer or a moderator, and a volunteer to run the equipment in the room.



Where to have an Interview

When choosing interview spots at your local library, you want to seek out small rooms that can be closed off. This will ensure that they are quiet enough. Carpet also helps dampen sound. You will want to have a table and enough chairs for 2-4 people. Keep in mind that what is comfortable to you may not be to an elderly veteran. Straight back chairs with arms are best. Try to avoid any chairs that are especially soft or low.

The leader in charge of setup should check each room by closing the door and listening for any errant sounds (air conditioning, lights, and electronics), so they can be addressed ahead of time. You can also pause a recording to address any sounds that pop up. Also have water available for the veteran in the room, and snacks in a waiting area. The idea is to make the veteran as comfortable as possible so they feel free to talk.

Setting up a Waiting Area

To keep veterans comfortable and at ease while waiting, consider having activities, snacks, and plenty of seating in a waiting area. You can use photos and videos from www.kwvdm.org to create a booth for veterans and family to visit. Inviting family (especially children and grandchildren) will give the veterans a support group, and allow them to carry on their discussion of the war with their family. If you notify the press, they can also be in attendance in this main area to interview veterans, and get you the coverage needed to create an annual event.

Recruit Your Veterans

You will need to get the word out to your veterans about the interview day with plenty of advanced notice. They will need time to search for artifacts, complete their biography form, and possibly arrange for transportation. The last thing you want to hear is, "I would have come if I had known earlier". Plan to start your notifications three months before and increase your coverage as you get closer to your interview date. And find your closest KWVA chapter using this link http://www.kwva.org/info_dept_chapter.asp

Setting up an Archive Station

Use the computer lab or area within your library as your archive station. Here you can set up any scanners needed for photos, and burn CDs for your veterans. Make sure there is enough seating to accommodate your volunteers and veterans comfortably.

Transportation and Parking

Make sure your library has ample parking and easy access for your veterans. Consider working with organizations to set up van pick up for veterans with limited mobility. On site, use signs and volunteers to make navigation from car to the interview site as easy as possible.

Refreshments

You should also have a station with light refreshments. Your local grocery store might be able to donate bottled water and snacks if you request early enough. If you are part of a school or organization, use official letterhead for any request to another organization.

Planning for the Interview

How Long Should My Interview Be?

Interviews should run about 40 minutes. If you choose about 10 questions to work from (with a few backups just in case), then you will find you can easily fill 40 minutes. Some veterans may be able to talk for longer, and others may need to stop sooner. Keep in mind that you will need to stay on schedule without interrupting a veteran, so space out your interviews about 1 hour apart to allow time to transition. Veterans are nothing if not punctual, so planning your time is key.



What Should I Ask?

Planning ahead for each interview is key. It is best to allow enough time for the veterans to share their basic biography sheet, so the interviewer/moderator can cater his/her questions to that particular veteran. The volunteers should be knowledgeable about the places and events that are relevant to their veteran(s). Below, you will find a list of possible questions.

*Before the interview, **ask your veteran** if there's anything they do or do NOT want to talk about. This gives them respect and control over the interview.

Introduce Yourself and the Veteran

Start the interview by having each Participant state his or her name, age, the date, and the location of the interview.

Next, start with light or "easy" questions to build trust:

- a) Where and when were you born?
- b) Who are/were your parents and what are/were their occupations?
- c) Who are/were your siblings? Names and genders? Which, if any, serve/served in the military?
- d) What were you doing before you entered the service?

Then, work through some of the more basic military questions:

- a) In which branch of the military did you serve?
- b) Did you enlist or were you drafted?
- c) If you enlisted, why did you choose that specific branch of the military?
- d) What happened when you departed for training camp and during your early days of training?
- e) Do you recall your instructors? If so, what were they like?
- f) Did you receive any specialized training? If so, what?
- g) How did you adapt to military life, including the physical regimen, barracks, food and social life?

These questions should be utilized with caution. Knowing your veteran's biography comes in handy here. Know that this is the part of the interview that might be hard for your veteran.

- a) Where did you serve?
- b) If you served abroad, what are some memories you have of that experience?
- c) If you were on the front lines, what combat action did you witness?
- d) If you were not on the front lines, what were your duties?
- e) If you saw combat, how did you feel when witnessing casualties and destruction?
- f) What kinds of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving, and with whom?
- g) How did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?
- h) What did you do for recreation or when you were off-duty?

Again, you must know your veteran's basic information for these questions. Make them more comfortable by including their own history within the question. For example, instead of just saying "How did you return home?" you could say, "When you came home in December, how was your journey?"

- a) Where were you when the war ended?
- b) How did you return home?
- c) How were you received by your family and community?
- d) How did you readjust to civilian life?
- e) Have you remained in contact with or reunited with fellow veterans? If so, who?
- f) Are you a member of any veterans' organizations? If so, which?
- g) What have you done since separating from the military?

Finish up with these questions. Always ask them if there is anything else that they would like to add. You may find that their last add on is the most important part of the interview.

- a) How did your wartime experiences affect your life?
 - b) What are some life lessons you learned from military service?
 - c) How has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?
 - d) What message would you like to leave for future generations who will view/hear this interview?
 - e) Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed, or should be added to this interview? If so, what?
- **When you are done with your interview, escort your veteran to the archive station or have a volunteer meet you outside the door to lead the veteran. Thank them for their time, and introduce them to the next volunteer so your veteran never feels lost or confused.**

Tips for your Interview

- Avoid verbal cues** such as saying "uh huh" or interrupting. Try to use visual cues like nodding your head and other body language to keep the conversation going.
- Use open-ended questions** without yes or no answers. These questions should start with phrases like, "Tell me about..." or "What was it like..." or "How did you feel when..."
- Watch out for **body language** throughout the interview. The way you sit will show your veteran that you are truly interested in their story.
- Provide context for listeners whenever possible. Phrases such as, "When you were in _____, how did you feel about..." Or "Tell us about what it was like to fight with Bill, your childhood friend..."
- Use questions that **encourage the veteran to provide details**. Good examples include questions like, "Can you paint a picture in words of your barracks?" or "What are some images that stand out when you think about your first day at training?"
- Ask **follow-up questions** even if they are not on your question list if you're curious about something.
- Think of your interview as a conversation**. While rehearsing or writing out your answers may help in preparing for your interview, we also recommend thinking of this as a time to have a meaningful conversation. Relax and let your words come naturally.
- Most of all, **relax and have fun**. Enjoy the opportunity to share the stories, thoughts, and the closeness that can come with this experience.

Recording the Conversation



Purchase Recording Equipment

The basic components needed to record interviews are a digital recorder, a microphone, and headphones. You can find both basic and more sophisticated recording equipment at your local electronics store or for purchase online. Whatever recording equipment you choose, we strongly suggest making sure that the library's staff and volunteers feel confident and ready to use it.

Set Up and Test the Equipment

Be sure to set up your equipment and check the sound before the interview. As a way to test your equipment, record a volunteer answering a few prompts, such as, "Tell me what you had for breakfast." Stop recording and then listen to the test recording to determine if everything is working and that the sound is clear and legible. Press RECORD again when you begin the actual interview.

A few tips for better audio quality:

- Wear headphones when recording. Your headphones are your "ears" for the interview; they tell you exactly what you'll hear on the finished recording.
- When using an external microphone, hold the microphone in your hand, moving it between you and your Storyteller.
- Hold the microphone about one hand span (about 5 inches) from your Storyteller's mouth. If you're using an internal microphone on a camera, set up the camera just far enough away to keep the picture in focus.
- Be careful of "mic-handling" noise. That's the low, rumbling sound you hear when you move the microphone in your hands. Use a light touch when handling the microphone, and minimize movement.
- If your veteran fidgets, respectfully remind him or her that the microphone picks up the sound.

Archive and Copy the Conversation

Plan to have one archive volunteer for each veteran who signs up. They will escort the veteran after the interview to an archive "station". Here you can move their interview file to the computer, scan their photos, and burn them a cd to take home.

1. Archiving Interviews

In order to archive interviews, it's important to have veterans sign a release form, and to offer them the option not to release their interview to the archive. Make sure they understand that their story would be going onto a website and be searchable via the internet. The veteran will also provide their biography form, and any photos they would like to scan into the archive. You must record each photo on a record sheet as they are scanned.

Preserving Digital Interview Files

We recommend that you begin backing up interview files *from the moment you record them*. That's as easy as:

- Transferring a file from the recorder's SD card to a computer/ server that's connected to backup server;
- transferring the file from the recorder's SD card to a computer or server and to an external hard drive; or
- Transferring a file from the recorder's SD card to a computer or server and burning a CD or DVD copy.

*We advise that you provide your veteran with a cd of their interview on the same day if possible.

**Many folklorists and oral historians who work with digital media recommend creating a checksum as soon as you create a digital file that's destined for an archive. For more information about checksums, please visit the online resource Oral History in the Digital Age: <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/06/resource-tutorial-on-checksum-for-digital-preservation-of-oral-history>

Submitting Interviews

You will use the computers in the library to submit the veterans photos and interview file at <http://www.kwvdm.org/participate.php?p=submit>

Setting Yourself Up for Future Success

1. Ideas to Make It Last

The best way to make your veteran history project last from year to year is to advertise your success.



PUBLICITY

Publicizing your interview collection program as part of your organization's programming is an opportunity to showcase your commitment to collecting and preserving your community's many stories. Being featured in local press or a newsletter is a great way to make veterans feel special and can heighten excitement about your program. Some other ways include:

- Using our press release template** in our **Resources & Tools** section to invite local press to visit during a recording day and speak with Participants.
- Submitting articles or op-ed pieces to a local newspaper** in your community. Explain how and why your institution decided to collect stories, and if possible provide quotes and anecdotes from Participants.
- Using **photos from your recording days** to enhance your marketing and communications efforts, such as brochures and flyers. Write about the program in your organization's newsletter.
- Posting **photos, interview clips, and articles** about the program on your social media sites.

PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing strong local partnerships allows you to take your project to the next level and introduce your program and your institution to entirely new audiences. To further your program goals, take advantage of existing partnerships or use this opportunity to forge new ones.

High Schools and Colleges: students are the perfect volunteers for this project. They have so much to learn from this event, and have the time to give. Also consider reaching out to the history department of your local college. There you can find students and professors with knowledge about archiving data and a love of history.

Local history centers, museums, and neighborhood associations: local organizations are the perfect partners. They are the people who have connections to your veterans and their communities. They can help transport veterans, donate supplies/equipment, provide mentors, and get the word out about your event.

Establishing a partnership with a local **radio station** is also a great way to inform your local community about your project. If you do not have a preexisting relationship with one, this would be a great opportunity to start one.

Every Interview Counts!

Thank you again for your support. We want to help you in any way we can. Feel free to email us with any questions or suggestions (Samantha.scannell@gmail.com). We would love to hear about your progress, so send us your news and photos leading up to your interview day. Don't forget that you also have templates and forms attached to this toolkit for your use.

Online Resources

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, provides basic notes on folklife fieldwork at www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/index.html.

Oral History in the Digital Age is an online resource for planning, implementing, and supporting oral history programs at your institution at <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu>.

Oral History Association's Principles & Best Practices for Oral History provides a set of guidelines for those interested in conducting oral histories at <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices>.

Activists' Guide to Archiving Video, created by Witness, focuses on video but has thorough and straightforward tips on capturing, preserving, and organizing digital field-based recordings at <http://archiveguide.witness.org>.

Transom, an online public radio community, has extensive product equipment reviews and instructional recording guides at www.transom.org/tools.

Audacity features instructions and tips for downloading, installing, and using their free audio editing software at www.audacity.sourceforge.net.