

VIDEOGRAPHER GUIDELINES

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INTRODUCTION

The Shoah Foundation was launched in March 1994 by filmmaker Steven Spielberg after being deeply inspired by the many Holocaust survivors he met and worked with while making his film *Schindler's List*. The organization operated from trailers on the Universal Studios lot and began an unprecedented effort to record, preserve, and share the testimonies of Holocaust survivors with the world. In 2006, the University of Southern California (USC) took over the Shoah Foundation.

The USC Shoah Foundation (USCSF), with nearly 56,000 recorded testimonies conducted in 62 countries and in 41 languages from Holocaust survivors as well as survivors of the Nanjing Massacre and Armenian, Guatemalan, Cambodian, and Rwandan genocides, is the largest Visual History Archive in the world. The mission of USCSF is to overcome prejudice, intolerance, and bigotry—and the suffering they cause—through the educational use of the Institute's Visual History Archive.

Originally, more than 1,000 videographers in 24 countries were trained by the USC Shoah Foundation to collect testimonies. Videographers were provided with all pertinent information including the date, location, and time of the interview, as well as the names of the interviewer and the survivor. This information was then coordinated by a Regional Coordinator.

Today, interviews are conducted through a joint effort by USC Shoah Foundation's Collections and Media Production departments, in partnership with interviewers and videographers all over the world.

Each oral history project is unique. Those who initiate an oral history project should consider their particular objectives and identify the specific knowledge and background needed for conducting interviews. Learning how to conduct and film an oral history interview takes time and practice. Although this is not an instructional guide, it is a detailed description of the Shoah Foundation Institute's procedures for filming an interview. We hope that it will be useful to anyone engaged in an oral history project.

One of the most important things we will keep reiterating and encourage you to keep in mind as you move forward with filming testimonies is that these interviews are not edited, and the clips are not trimmed. This is to maintain research and historical integrity. Each testimony goes through a preservation process upon delivery and will be indexed for research and archival purposes. Therefore, the set-up and understanding of what is to be filmed and how we need it delivered is of utmost importance.

The following information gives you all the necessary equipment and tech specs, your responsibilities, and how our interviews are conducted. **Reading this packet thoroughly is mandatory in preparation for the interview. Here you will find all considerations for before, during, and after filming.**

Thank you very much for your interest in working with us—welcome to our team!

Standard USCSF Equipment Package:

Please match this equipment as closely as possible.

- 4K Camera with recording quality of at least 50Mbps
- Zoom or Prime Lens
- Tripod w/Head
- LCD monitor
- Lite Panel Lighting Kit or equivalent
- Softbox or diffusion to create a soft look
- Direct Power Source Preferred / Batteries okay
- Cards that amount to at least 6-8 hours of recording time
- Duvetyn/black fabric drape for photo/artifact segment

- Microphone Kit:
2 mics minimum are always needed - 1 for interviewee, 1 for interviewer. Any of these mic combinations are fine:
 - Boom and a lavalier or shotgun mic (If there will be family members appearing on camera, the boom is usually an easier option for the Interviewee mic.)
 - 2 Lavs or 2 shotgun mics
 - 2 Booms
 - Backup 3rd mic is optional

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

CAMERA:

- Strong preference for 4K resolution. If H.265 codec is possible, please use. If you need to shoot in 1080, please let USCSF Production know ahead of time.
- Camera with minimum 50Mbps bit rate
- Set timecode to zero before recording and do not reset during the interview. (The camera will remember the time code even if shut off.)
- Record in 29.97 in 16 x 9 Aspect ratio.
- Re: Color – Baked in color is preferred.
 - **Do not** shoot in Log.
 - A LUT will not be applied by USCSF in Post.
 - REC 709 is the preferred color profile to use.

AUDIO:

ALL AUDIO MUST BE RECORDED DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA, NO SEPARATE AUDIO FILES.

- Please let Production know if you are unable to record directly to camera.

RECORD ON 2 SEPARATE CHANNELS:

- Interviewee on Channel 1 – Lav 1 or Boom/Stick microphone can be used on Interviewee
- Interviewer on Channel 2 – Lav 2 or Boom/Stick microphone can be used on Interviewer
- Add onboard microphone for backup on Channel 3 – preferred if camera provides 3-4 channels

DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

Please refer to the TESTIMONY FILE NAMING & DELIVERY GUIDELINES for detailed instructions on uploading footage, behind-the-scenes photos, and required documents.

- High Bandwidth will make it easier for Delivery
- Please have a Hard Drive to hold a backup of the interview for up to 3 months—it can take several months to preserve and QC interviews
- All BTS (Behind the Scenes) and Portraits of interviewees captured should be included with delivery of the footage and any archival artifacts.
- If uploading the footage, BTS, and documents are impossible for you, USCSF Production will supply a drive and a FedEx label to ship the drive to USCSF after the interview.

OVERALL TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

LIGHTING

The goal of these guidelines is to establish a consistent look for all interviews. Basically, we are expecting a very soft, low-contrast look. Normally, this can be achieved with simple, 3 Point Lighting. Although we have made suggestions for ways to approach lighting, you may have your own way of achieving the desired look. If so, you may exercise your professional judgment.

AUDIO

Audio must be monitored throughout the duration of the shoot using headphones, maintaining good and equal levels and assessing any background noise.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES (BTS)

We ask that the Videographer be responsible for a **few portraits of the survivor and a few behind-the-scenes shots**, to be sent to USCSF Production at the conclusion of the interview along with the signed documents and footage delivery.

Here are a few things that are important to emphasize:

1. **WE DO NOT EDIT THESE INTERVIEWS AT ALL because they are oral histories. ALL content that is recorded** (Color bars/pre-roll, side conversations if you're rolling, etc....) **is part of the interview, will be displayed in the order it is recorded and will be available forever in the Visual History Archive. Please be aware of this whenever you're filming.**
2. **RE: Recording**, please coordinate with your Interviewer for how you all will handle the Recording Heading. Normally, they will want to count down, "3, 2, 1..." and then you hit play and nod or indicate non-verbally that you're rolling. We don't want to record anyone saying "action" or "rolling."
3. Please do not film archive photos on computer/tablet screens unless absolutely necessary. There is often a moray affect in doing so, and it is always better to film physical photos when discussing them.
4. Re-check the lighting, focus, and audio levels of the interviewee after returning from any break. Also, re-check between the interview, family segment, and artifact segment.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

At least 48 hours ahead of the interview, you will be sent an informational email with the **Slate, Call Sheet, and Required Releases**. It is your responsibility to print out and bring the **Slate and copies of the Interviewee Release Agreement and Individual Release Form** to set. Please also include extra copies of the **Individual Release Form** in case there is more than one family member there who appears on camera.

When you receive your call sheet, you will receive the interviewer's contact info—**we strongly encourage you to call the interviewer ahead of time to discuss details for the day and make sure you both are on the same page**. You should plan to arrive at the location at the same time as the interviewer (if it is an in-person interview) at the time assigned by USCSF Production.

Notes on Your Relationship with the Interviewer:

Your relationship with the interviewer is very important and can make the difference between a good interview and a bad one. Please keep in mind the following:

- Each interviewer you work with will have a different level of experience. You may be working with someone who has conducted 100 interviews and is quite comfortable with film gear or you may be working with an interviewer conducting their first interview for USCSF who may look to you for support. Regardless of their experience level, the interviewer is ultimately responsible for the content and length of the interview. If you sense that an interviewer is not performing adequately, do not confront them with this directly unless they are actively seeking your advice. Instead, inform USCSF Production that you sense a problem.
- Although all our interviewers have gone through an intensive, 5-hour training course and have been taught skills to help gather the entire testimony within a two-hour period, this will not always be the case. Be prepared to go longer if the interviewer indicates that it is necessary. (This means you should have enough media cards if the interview runs long) as some interviews can go up to 4-5 hours.
- While the interviewer is responsible for the content and length of the testimony, you are the final authority on the look and sound. For example, if the interviewer takes a seat too far away from the camera and this causes the survivor's eyeline to veer towards a profile shot, it is YOUR responsibility to direct the interviewer to sit closer to the camera.
- Discuss your process for breaks—technical or other—with the interviewer before filming begins, as the interviewer will determine when they occur. If a technical problem arises, a simple tap on the interviewer's shoulder may signify the need for a break.
- Remember that you and the interviewer must think of yourselves as a team whose goal is to make the survivor feel as comfortable as possible while getting the best interview you can.

ARRIVAL AT THE INTERVIEW

At the location, you should meet the interviewer (and, when available, the production assistant) outside of the location of the interview—usually the survivor’s home or a studio. This will give you another opportunity to coordinate and discuss things with the interviewer without having to talk about technicalities in front of the survivor.

This is the time to work out any details with the rest of your team. For example: The interviewer will be able to tell you what has been discussed with the survivor during the pre-interview conducted earlier. The interviewer will know if the survivor will be joined by family at the end of the interview and if he/she will have any photographs or artifacts to show in the last part of the interview.

Note on sensitivities:

1. As you will likely be filming in the interviewee’s home, please be sensitive to the fact that they may not be accustomed to having strangers come into their living room with camera and lighting equipment. Remember to ask permission before moving furniture or any other items, and please move items back after the interview concludes.
2. Many Holocaust interviewees are members of the Orthodox community—since you will be a guest in their house, please be mindful of **a) your attire and b) whether or not you have any visible tattoos**—if you have any concerns, always touch base with your interviewer or with USCSF Production to discuss concerns and make plans for the day.
3. Food will not be provided so **please bring water, snacks, and a quick-to-eat lunch**. Food may be consumed during breaks. **Please do not eat while recording**. Please coordinate with the interviewer about snack and lunch breaks.

INTERVIEW SET UP

VIDEO

- Upon arrival, allow the interviewer and interviewee time to get comfortable with all three of you in the space.
- Work with the interviewer and survivor to find the best place for the interview to be filmed.
- Always choose a location that allows for depth, with a glimpse of the survivor’s home in the background. NEVER position a survivor directly against a wall or window.
- A window in the background can often be a nice touch if it is diffused by soft drapes. However, avoid sunny lighting, and overexposed windows. Do not use windows if light is too bright.

- While you are setting up, the interviewer should use this time to review and select the photos and artifacts that the interviewee will share at the end of the interview.
- Be prepared with cards that have at least 6 or more hours of recording time. Remember that the interview length is ultimately the responsibility of the interviewer.
- The interviewer will set the timing and determine when there may be breaks in the interview. This should be discussed with the interviewer before the interview.
- **Set the timecode to hour 00:00:00:00 and let it run continuously while taping the interview. You will stop the camera but do not reset the timecode during an interview.**
- Create a soft, low-contrast look with a backlight as a kick for good separation from the background.
- Set camera for DROP frame. (This applies only to NTSC cameras.)
- Whenever possible, use a power supply for the camera and lights instead of batteries.
- To achieve the desirable, 'portrait' look, use a longer lens at a wide-open F-stop, which will soften the background.
- The interviewer should be asked to sit on the same side of the camera as the key light.
- Be sure there is adequate light in the survivor's eyes.
- If a survivor wears glasses or if the clothing he or she is wearing is a problem, ask the interviewer if they could gently ask the survivor if they would feel comfortable changing clothes or removing their glasses. However, keep in mind that the final decision always rests with the interviewee.
- Remember to white-balance your camera after setting up your lights.
- While setting your lights and frame, keep in mind that after giving his or her testimony, the interviewee may invite other family members to appear on camera (e.g., children, grandchildren, husband, wife).
- NOTE: For any family members that speak on camera, please work with the Interviewer to have them sign an **Individual Release Form** which you've printed and brought to the interview. This is provided by USCSF Production in your confirmation email. Please scan the agreements and either upload them with the footage or email them to USCSF Production if sending the footage via hard drive.

AUDIO

- Interviewee on Channel 1 - on Boom or Lav microphone
- Interviewer on Channel 2 - on Lav mic or Stick mic. (Lav preferred.)

FILMING THE INTERVIEW

SLATE

Production will email you a paper slate. It is your responsibility to bring the slate to set.

At the beginning of the interview, it is your responsibility to make sure that the interviewer reads the paper slate while you record. Please remember to check with the interviewer that the names are spelled correctly on the slate. After the slating is over, you will cut.

Please see the two examples on page 15 of this document to see how the slate can be filmed. Discuss with interviewer how they would like to film the slate.

Both examples require the interviewer, with the camera rolling, to clearly state the following:

- INTERVIEWER'S OWN NAME (& SPELLING)
- DATE
- "I AM CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW WITH ... [SURVIVOR'S NAME]"
- CITY, STATE, AND COUNTRY OF THE INTERVIEW
- LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW

You will cut after this and the interviewer will then move off camera. Please discuss with the interviewer how you all will communicate about cutting and cuing you to start filming each section.

MAIN INTERVIEW PORTION

- Remember to work out the logistics for camera battery and card changes and other technical breaks with the interviewer prior to the start of the interview.
- While speaking, the survivor should look at the interviewer, not at the camera. To achieve a proper eye line, the interviewer should sit as close to the camera as possible, at eye level with the camera. Occasionally, even an experienced interviewer will need to be reminded of this. It also will be especially important to check the survivor's eyeline when you film hybrid interviews.
- During the interview do not lean over the interviewer's shoulder and suggest questions. The videographer should never intrude on the relationship between the interviewer and the survivor.

- While the interview is in progress do not cut the camera recording without permission from the interviewer. There may be periods of long pauses or emotional breakdowns. You may cut during an emergency, major technical issue, or if the survivor or interviewer wants to pause.

FAMILY MEMBER SEGMENT

During the final moments of the interview the survivor may invite members of his or her family (especially children and grandchildren) to appear on camera for a few casual moments. Although your angle and lighting may be relatively simple to adjust, your sound considerations might present more of a challenge. Don't be afraid to ask your subjects to speak up, or to take a few moments to adjust your boom or camera mic. Do not assume the survivor's lav mic will clearly pick up family members. If you find that the only way to clearly record everyone's voice is for a handheld or lav mic to be passed around by the family, please remind them not to allow it to rub against clothing and not to move it when speaking.

ARCHIVAL ARTIFACT / PHOTOS SEGMENT

Finally, the survivor will be asked to present photographs, documents, or artifacts which may be of interest.

Set up a copy-stand situation—your camera should remain on the tripod; tilt the camera down toward the copy-stand to capture the photos. The survivor should stand/sit off-camera and describe each photo/artifact. PHOTOS SHOULD NOT BE HELD BY THE SURVIVOR OR INTERVIEWER. We like to avoid showing them on a computer or tablet as mentioned before.

Once again, photos should be chosen before the interview begins (while you're setting up) so the interviewer will know what questions to ask about the items.

Be sure to film beyond the entire photograph and then move in if necessary for details. Since the photographs will also be part of the archive, they must be established as being complete, unedited, untrimmed documents. See example in the appendix.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- While you are breaking down your equipment, the interviewer will be gathering some final information from the interviewee. If the interviewer requires additional time to complete the paperwork, please be patient.
- Please be sure to secure the recording media safely and hang on to it for at least 3 months as it may take a while for us to get it in our archive and QC'd. **PLEASE MAKE SCANNED COPIES OF THE ORIGINAL SIGNED PAPERWORK** and include them in your upload.
- Please complete a production report noting any technical issues, number of cards used, duration of the interview, and any special instructions.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

To do your best possible job as a videographer, it is essential that you take good care of yourself. This means arriving on location fully rested, being conscious of keeping some “distance” between you and the stories you will be documenting, and taking time after your long day in the field to relax. The histories you are exposed to may emotionally affect you, and secondary PTSD is real—if you feel that this has happened to you, please reach out to us for help.

Thank you again for your interest and welcome to the USC Shoah Foundation. We look forward to working with you!

HYBRID INTERVIEWS

A "Hybrid" Interview means the Interviewer will be attending this interview via Zoom.

This interview is the same except it requires **additional equipment and we schedule an extra 30 minutes in set-up time since you have a laptop to set up as well.**

Equipment requirements:

- **Laptop**
- **External speakers or Bluetooth speakers** – to ensure the Survivor can hear the Interviewer
- **Mic for the laptop or the Bluetooth speaker** so we pick up the Interviewer's sound for the recording
- **Laptop Stand** (If you don't have one and are comfortable with figuring it out so the computer is on par with the survivor's eyeline so that it appears they are speaking to the Interviewer next to the camera, that's fine with us—it can be easier to have one. If you don't have one, we can send you a link on Amazon to one we use that works well or you can get one you like in the range of \$30-40. We'll reimburse you for it, just let us know prior and list it on your invoice as Misc. Production Equipment.)

About a half hour into your set-up, the Interviewer calls the Survivor and checks in and talks about any last-minute details. About an hour and a half after call-time we call the Interviewer via Zoom and hand over the hosting capabilities to the Interviewer and you, the Videographer, and you conduct the interview exactly as you would if the Interviewer is in the room with you. The Interviewer never hangs up until the interview is completely over.

You can call us at any time with any issues or questions.

FORMAT OF A USC SHOAH FOUNDATION TESTIMONY

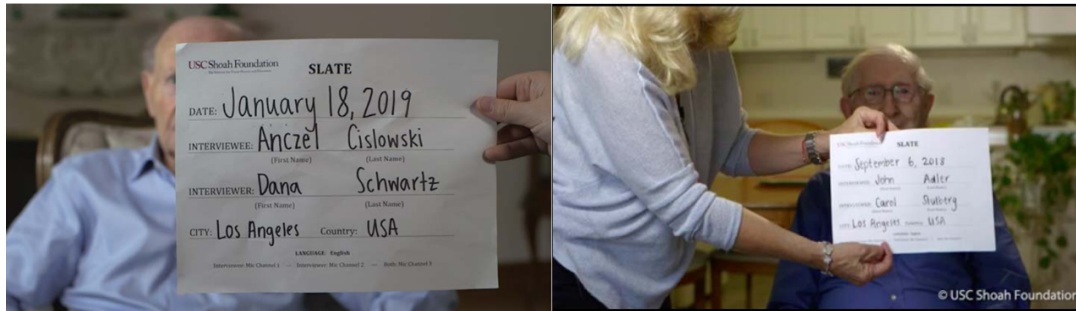
The following example is from an interview filmed in an interviewee's home in 1997. Please note that the Archival Artifacts' and Family Members sections may change order depending on the preference of the Interviewer and on the schedules of family members but the slate is always the first thing of every interview.

- [00:00:23](#) **SLATE.** The slate is held by the interviewee while the interviewer reads it aloud.
- [00:00:47](#): **INTERVIEWER.** Sometimes—not always—the interviewer chooses to step into the frame to introduce themselves.
- [01:56:00](#): **ARCHIVAL ARTIFACTS / PHOTOS.** The interview ends and the camera operator cuts and then each photo and artifact is filmed and discussed. Cut after each one.
- [02:21:10](#): **FAMILY MEMBERS.** Film family members as a group with Interviewee on camera. More often than not, the interviewee elects to invite family members on camera.

VISUALS OF A USC SHOAH FOUNDATION TESTIMONY

PART 1: SLATE – Can be filmed in two different ways

1A. Slate document held by in front of interviewee, the interviewer says: “Today’s date is [date]. Interviewing [survivor]. The interviewer is [interviewer]. In [location, country].” Camera cuts.

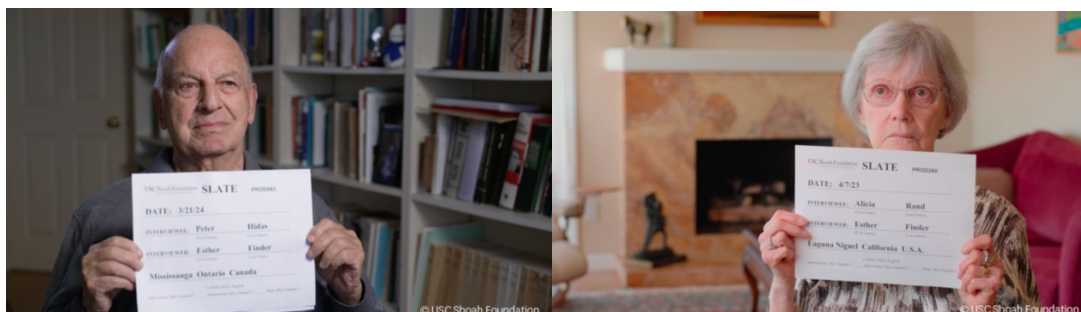


1B. The Interviewer sits next to the interviewee and reads off the slate a second time: “Today’s date is [date]. Interviewing [interviewee]. The interviewer is [interviewer]. In [location, country].” Camera cuts.



OR

2. Slate is filmed once. Document held by in interviewee, the interviewer says: “Today’s date is [date]. Interviewing [survivor]. The interviewer is [interviewer]. In [location, country].” Camera cuts.



PART 2: INTERVIEW - Discussion on Prewar, War, Post-War Life



***Camera is only cut during the interview when a break is needed. ***

PART 3: FAMILY SEGMENT



Camera continuously rolls for the whole family segment.

PART 4: ARCHIVAL ARTIFACTS



* Camera cuts between each archival artifact/photo. *

SHOT LIST FOR “BEHIND THE SCENES” FOR NEW TESTIMONIES

Please do not crop in too closely. We can crop in post.

POSED PHOTOS

- **Interviewee On Set**

- Solo photos while sitting, facing camera (both smiling and serious expressions)



- Photo of Interviewee with a Slate (This helps us tell the story of interview capture.)



- Full body photos, if possible, but please at least include the subject’s shoulders.
- Take some of the photos at the same eye level as the interviewee.
- The interviewee can be facing you head on or at an angle.



- Behind the Camera



- Photos with Family Members / Staff



- **Interviewee Off Set (while not filming)**

- Posed photos in action (see below as an example)



CANDID PHOTOS

- **Interviewee on set or Interviewee off set (while not filming)**

- Solo photos of the Interview during the interview
- Photos of interviewee interacting with interviewer and family members



- We don't need photos with staff prepping the interviewee on set.

- **Interviewee showing photos and documents (zoomed in and out)**



BTS VIDEO

Note: If you shoot video BTS on cell phones, please film **horizontally**.

- Interviewee speaking on camera(s)
- Interviewee speaking with cameras/monitors also in frame
- Interviewee entering frame and sitting in their "resting pose"
- Interviewee interacting with crew/staff