

VIDEOGRAPHER GUIDELINES

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For more information, please visit: sfi.usc.edu

Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Updated September 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Each oral history project is unique. Those who initiate an oral history project should take into account its 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.

The USC Shoah Foundation, 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 the Institute 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.

TECHNICAL ACQUISITION REQUIREMENTS

- Strong preference for 4K resolution; consult coordinator if this is not possible.
- Camera with minimum 50Mbps bit rate
- Set time code 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 – baking in color is preferred; if you shoot with a LUT please let us know
- Interviewee on Channel 1 – lav 1
- Interviewer on Channel 2 – lav 2
- Add onboard microphone for backup on Channel 3 – preferred if camera provides 3-4 channels
 - ALL AUDIO MUST BE RECORDED DIRECTLY TO CAMERA, NO SEPARATE AUDIO FILES
- All BTS and portraits of interviewees captured should be included on hard drive
- Keep a copy of the interview before sending the original cards/drives back to USC SF.
- ***Production Coordinator will supply FedEx labels to ship cards/drives to USC SF after interview***
 - USC SF can offload personal drives and return to the videographer, OR videographer can purchase new drive and add cost of drive to their invoice

Standard USC SF equipment package

(please match 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 Lite Kit or equivalent
- Soft Box or diffusion to create a soft look
- Batteries
- Lavalier Mic kit (one lav mic for interviewee and one for interviewer)
- Boom Mic (optional) for family segment
- Duvetyn/black fabric drape for photo/artifact segment

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Reading this packet thoroughly is mandatory in preparation for the interview. Here you will find all considerations for before, during, and after filming.

At least 48 hours ahead of the interview, you will be sent a call sheet. Along with the call sheet you will receive a **paper slate** and the **individual release form**. It is your responsibility to print out the slate and copies of the individual release form and bring them to set.

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 to the location at the same time as the interviewer, at the time assigned by the *Production Manager*.

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. 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 his/her first interview for USC SF who may look to you for support. Regardless of their experience, 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 him/her with this directly unless he/she is actively seeking your advice. Instead, inform your *Production Coordinator* that you sense a problem.
- Although all of our interviewers have gone through an intensive 25-hour training session 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).
- 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 shoulder may signify the need for a break.**
- Remember that you and the interviewer have to 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.

ARRIVING TO THE INTERVIEW

At the location, you should meet the interviewer (and, when available, the production assistant) outside the survivor's home. This will give you another opportunity to coordinate and discuss 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.
- If a volunteer production assistant is assigned to you, they may have a lot of technical expertise, a limited amount, or no experience at all and will need guidance. Let the volunteer know exactly what his/her role will be so he/she is an asset to you. He/She can label media, write production reports, help set up and wrap equipment, sit in for lighting, meet family members so that filming is not disturbed, etc. During the interview itself, this assistant should be out of the room unless immediately needed during the filming.

Note on sensitivities:

1. As you will likely be shooting in the survivor's home please be sensitive to the fact that he or she may not be accustomed to having strangers come into his/her living room with camera and lighting equipment. Remember to ask permission before moving furniture or any other items.
2. Many interviewees are members of Orthodox community—since you will be a guest in their house, please be mindful of a) you're attire and b) whether or not you have any visible tattoos—if you have any concerns, always touch base with your interviewer to discuss further and make plans for the day.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

LIGHTING

The goal of these guidelines is to establish a consistent look to all interviews. Basically, we are expecting a very soft, low contrast look. 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, maintaining good levels and assessing any background noise.

Overview check list:

Here are a few things that are important to emphasize:

1. Check the sound frequency in your area. Please scan for clear frequencies when using wireless devices, as it is easy to get radio interference.
2. Please listen to the sound through good quality headphones. **You will use 2 lavs and a shotgun mic for backup** (the shotgun is optional, but preferred if you have a camera that can record 3 channels) in case of any sound problems.
3. Know that **WE DO NOT EDIT THE INTERVIEW** – so ALL content that is recorded (Color bars/pre-roll etc...) is part of the interview and will be available in the Visual History Archive.
4. When filming archive photos on computer/tablet screens – note that there is a moiré/artifact problem in doing so, and it is always better film actual photos when discussing them.
5. Re-check lighting, focus, and audio levels of interviewee after returning from any break. Re-check between interview and family segment and artifact segment.
6. Without the luxury of seeing the location before the interview, lighting the subject is extremely important. Please refrain from using overhead fluorescent lights as a substitute.

PLEASE NOTE: If a Professional photographer is not at the interview, we ask that the Videographer is responsible for **a few portraits of the survivor and a few behind the scenes shots, to be sent to the Production Coordinator at the conclusion of the interview.**

SET UP

Please review the following points:

- While you're setting up, this gives the interviewer and interviewee time to get comfortable with all three of you in the space. Additionally, the interviewer should use this time to review the photos and artifacts that the survivor will share at the end of the interview.
- 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.
- A window in the background can often be a nice touch if it is diffused by soft drapes. However, avoid sunny, overexposed windows.
- While you are setting up, the interviewer and survivor will select photographs and documents to be filmed during the last moments of the interview.
- The Videographer will be prepared with cards that amount to at least 6 hours of recording time. **Remember that interview length is ultimately the responsibility of the interviewer.**
- Set timecode to hour 00:00:00:00 and let it **run continuously** while taping the interview. Do not reset timecode during an interview.
- Put the survivor on channel 1 with lav mic.
- Put the interviewer on channel 2 with either a boom or lav mic. (Lav preferred)
- 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 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.
- 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 UP (continued)

- If a survivor wears glasses or if the clothing he or she is wearing is a problem, ask the interviewer if he/she could gently ask the survivor if he/she would feel comfortable changing clothes or removing his/her glasses. However, keep in mind that the final decision always rests with the survivor.
- 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 survivor 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 have them sign a release form, provided by your production coordinator. You can FedEx these forms to USC SF with your hard drive post-interview.**

FILMING THE INTERVIEW

Your primary responsibility is to make sure the interviewee is in focus, properly exposed and his/her audio levels are good. The interviewer, who may be new or lacking technical experience, is ultimately responsible for the content, direction and length of the interview.

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

PRODUCTION WILL PROVIDE YOU A PAPER SLATE. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING A COPY TO SET.

After the slating is over, the interviewer will appear on camera with the survivor. The interviewer, with the camera rolling, should 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

The interviewer will then move off camera and begin the interview by asking the survivor to say:

- NAME (& SPELLING)
- NAME AT BIRTH (& SPELLING)
- ANY OTHER NAMES (& SPELLINGS)
- NICKNAME(S)
- BIRTHDATE
- AGE
- CITY (& SPELLING) and COUNTRY OF BIRTH

PLEASE REVIEW THE FOLLOWING POINTS

- At the beginning of the interview, start with a shot that is wider than you might prefer. We want to show a glimpse of the surroundings, especially if it's in the survivor's home. Once the interview has begun you should very slowly zoom in to a comfortable medium shot. Be sure to avoid extreme close-ups. Once you have reached the desired framing, **do not zoom in or out during the recording**. Such camera moves would add editorial comment to the testimony, thereby compromising its historical validity.
- 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 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.
- During the interview do not lean over the interviewer's shoulder and suggest questions. The videographer should never intrude on the relationship between interviewer and survivor.
- While the interview is in progress do not stop the camera recording without permission from the interviewer. There may be periods of long pauses or emotional breakdowns. Under no circumstances (other than an emergency or if the survivor needs to leave their chair) should the camera be stopped. These are historical testimonies, the content of which is considered valuable material to scholars, researchers, academicians, etc.

Do not misconstrue this to mean that there should be no cuts between the slate and the introduction by the interviewer, between the introduction and the actual testimony or between photographs in the photo session. It is only during the actual testimony of the survivor that the camera should not be stopped unless the interviewer calls for a break. If technical issues arise, get the interviewer's attention in the pre-determined manner you discussed prior to the shoot.

THE 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.

THE PHOTO / ARTIFACT 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 towards 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 because of the reflection and artifacts.

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.
- Complete the Production Report per sample in the Appendix, making sure that everything is filled out completely and legibly.
- Please be sure to secure the recording media safely and PLEASE MAKE COPIES OF ORIGINALS.
- Your production coordinator will arrange return shipment of the hard drives or cards (and releases for family members if applicable) via FedEx.
- If you purchased a drive for the interview, please invoice USC SF for the item.
- Please complete a production report noting any technical issues, number of cards used, duration of the interview, and any special instructions (i.e. LUTs to apply, etc).

NOTE: If using your own camera or a rental, make sure it is in good working order after you have finished as well as before.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

To do your best possible job as 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 the project manager for help.