

# One unhurried hour with someone you love

This sheet walks you through recording a parent, grandparent, or old friend telling their stories. You need this paper, a phone that records, and an hour without a clock in it.

## Before you sit down

- ☐ Asked permission a few days ahead, so they can warm to it.
- ☐ Picked their territory — the kitchen table, the porch, their chair.
- ☐ Charged the phone and tested the voice recorder once.
- ☐ Brought one old photograph to put on the table.
- ☐ Turned off the television; silenced my own phone.

## While they're talking

- Let silence work. Count to five before rescuing a pause — the best stories arrive late.
- Follow the light in their eyes, not this list. If a question leads somewhere else, go there.
- Ask “what happened next?” and “what was that like?” more than anything.
- Don't correct details. You're collecting their memory, not auditing it.
- Stop while it's still good. Forty-five warm minutes beats three tired hours.

## Twelve questions that open doors

*Circle the ones that fit. Three or four are plenty for one sitting.*

1. What is your earliest memory — the one you actually remember, not the story you were told?
2. What did the kitchen of your childhood home smell like?
3. Who was kind to you when they didn't have to be?
4. What was your first job, and what did you buy with the first money you earned?
5. How did you meet the person you loved most?
6. What is a decision that changed the direction of your life?
7. Tell me about a time you were braver than you felt.
8. What did an ordinary good day look like at the happiest time of your life?

9. What do you know for certain?
10. What would you tell yourself at twenty-five?
11. What do you want the youngest person in this family to know about where they come from?
12. Is there a story you've never told because nobody ever asked?

## Who, when, where

*Fill this in the same day — future listeners will thank you.*

Speaking: Interviewer:

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Date: Place: Photo on the table:

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## Notes — stories to follow up on next time

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## Quotes worth keeping word-for-word

*The exact phrasing is the treasure. Write it the way they said it.*

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## Afterward

- ☐ Moved the recording off the phone the same day (computer, family folder, or private archive).
- ☐ Named the file with person, date, and subject.
- ☐ Told them what it meant to me.