



INFORMATION PACKET

Welcome! Thank you for your interest in participating in a Bridges Library System recording. This guide outlines the recording process and offers tips for your conversation.



About Bridges Library System Bridges Library System, funded by the state, serves 24 member libraries in southeastern Wisconsin. In 2021, Bridges Library System received a grant from Bader Philanthropies, Inc. to bring StoryCorps to Wisconsin and train 12 facilitators to record and preserve stories. Participants receive a free copy of their recordings, and with

permission, a copy is archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

The initial 18-month partnership with StoryCorps was extended by an additional 12 months, ending in April 2024. From May 2024, recordings facilitated by Bridges Library System member libraries are part of the Community Voices of Jefferson and Waukesha Counties initiative (“Community Voices”).

What to Expect During Your Community Voices Recording

- **Duration:** Your interview will last 40 minutes, allowing for meaningful conversation with a friend or loved one.
- **Facilitator:** A trained facilitator will meet you, explain the process, and ensure you feel comfortable in the recording space.

Recording Step-by-Step

1. **Welcome:** The facilitator will welcome you, explain their role, and set up the recording equipment. They will also answer any questions you may have.
2. **Logistics:** You'll complete initial paperwork, including a brief data sheet.
3. **Sound Check:** The facilitator will check audio levels and ensure you are comfortable.
4. **The Interview:** The facilitator will keep time, monitor audio, and may take notes. They are not interviewers but may ask questions.
5. **Release Forms:** After the interview, the facilitator will explain your release form options. You can choose to keep your interview private or share and archive it with partners like the Library of Congress StoryCorps.



Optional Photos At the end of the recording, the facilitator can take a photo of you and your interview partner. These photos will be included in the archive at the Library of Congress.

Interview Tips A Community Voices interview is a wonderful way to celebrate and share a loved one's life with future generations. Though 40 minutes may seem long, the session often goes by quickly. Here are some tips to make the most of your interview:

- **Preparation:** Think about the topics you want to discuss beforehand. Focus on a few areas you'd like to cover.
- **Open-Ended Questions:** Ask questions that cannot be answered with one word. Examples include "Tell me about..." or "How did you feel when..."

- **Natural Conversation:** Maintain a conversational tone. Ask follow-up questions if curious and allow your partner to go off-topic occasionally.
- **Patience:** Moments of silence are okay. Allow time for your partner to process and answer questions.
- **Share Stories:** Use the interview to share favorite stories and memories.
- **Emotional Preparedness:** Be prepared for a range of emotions.
- **Reflective Questions:** End with questions like, “What are the most important lessons you’ve learned?” or “What legacy would you like to leave?”
- **Continued Conversation:** Continue the discussion after the recording stops.
- **Be Yourself:** Be curious and open-hearted.



Great Questions List (Source: StoryCorps)

Life

1. What was one of the happiest moments of your life? The saddest?
2. Who has had the biggest influence on you?
3. How has your life been different than you imagined it would be?
4. Do you have any regrets?
5. What are you the proudest of?

Growing Up

1. Tell me about the community where you grew up.
2. What were you like as a child?
3. What did you do for fun?
4. Did you ever get into trouble? What was the worst thing you did?

5. Did you have a nickname? How did you get it?
6. What is one of your favorite stories from your youth?
7. What were your parents like?
8. Who were your favorite relatives?
9. What are the classic family stories? Jokes? Songs?

Love

1. When did you first fall in love?
2. Tell me about your spouse/partner.
3. How did you propose?
4. What were the best times? The most difficult times?
5. What have you learned from your relationships?

School

1. Did you enjoy school? What kind of student were you?
2. How would your classmates remember you?
3. What are your best/worst memories of school?
4. Tell me about a teacher who had a particularly strong influence on your life.

Parenthood

1. Can you describe the moment when you saw your child for the first time?
2. How has being a parent changed you?
3. Do you have any favorite stories about your kids?
4. Do you remember any songs you used to sing to your child? Can you sing them now?
5. What are your dreams for your children?

Work

1. What did you want to be when you grew up?
2. Tell me about how you got into your line of work.
3. What lessons has your work life taught you?
4. If you could do anything now, what would you do? Why?
5. What makes you passionate about what you do?
6. How has your work changed you?

War

1. Were you in the military?
2. Did you go to war? What was it like?
3. How did war change you?
4. During your service, can you recall times when you were afraid?
5. What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

Spirituality

1. Can you tell me about your religious/spiritual beliefs? What formed them?
2. How have your beliefs changed during your life?
3. What was the most profound spiritual moment of your life?
4. Have you experienced any miracles?
5. Do you believe in an after-life? What do you think it will be like?

Leaving a Legacy

1. What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
2. Is there anything you've never told me that you'd like to tell me today?
3. What advice would you pass on to those who come after you?
4. How do you want to be remembered?

Remembrance

1. Tell me about a vivid memory you have of [name].
2. Describe what [name] looked like.
3. What about [name] made you smile?
4. What are the things you miss most about [name]?
5. Tell me what your relationship with [name] was like.
6. What are your favorite jokes or anecdotes that [name] used to share?
7. What is something special about [name] you would want others to know?
8. How are you different from before you lost [name]?
9. What has helped you in your grief?
10. If you could talk to [name] right now, what would you say?

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should I bring to the interview? A Community Voices interview is typically a conversation between two people who are important to one another. Choose someone with whom you'd like to have a meaningful conversation.

What should we talk about during our interview? There are no strict rules. Focus on sharing and celebrating your stories. Use this document for inspiration and consider the interview a way to preserve your stories.

Who are the Facilitators and what do they do during the recording session?

Facilitators are trained staff and volunteers from Bridges Library System member libraries. They ensure a comfortable and meaningful recording experience and handle all technical aspects.

Where do recordings take place? Recordings can occur in various settings with portable recording equipment called StoryKits. Participants and facilitators can choose the best location for a quality recording.

How long is the interview? The process takes about an hour, with 40 minutes of recording time. You can take breaks if needed.

What will happen to my recording after my interview session? Two to six weeks after your interview, you'll receive an email link to your recording. With your permission, a copy will be archived with partners like the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Will my story be excerpted for the public to hear? If you sign a General Release Form, your interview might be excerpted for online, radio, or print use. Less than 1% of interviews are broadcast on NPR's Morning Edition.

How much does it cost to participate? Participation is free of charge.

What happens if I don't want my interview to go to the archive? If you don't sign the release, your interview will not be archived. Regardless, you will receive a copy of your conversation to share with friends and family.

Planning for Your Interview

Consider the following questions before your recording session:

What moments in your life presented challenges? Why were they challenging?
What choices did you make? What were the outcomes and lessons learned?

List 3-5 main topics you'd like to discuss:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

List any topics you do not want to discuss:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Write down five questions you'd like to ask your interview partner:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Great Follow-Up Questions

- How did that make you feel?
- What happened next?
- Can you remember a specific time...?
- Can you give me an example?
- Can you paint a picture in words?
- What were you thinking when that happened?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say to one another?

Feel free to develop your own questions or use the Great Questions List for inspiration.

General questions or privacy setting changes can be directed to:

CommunityVoices@bridgeslibrarysystem.org