

VIDEO TAPING TIPS

FOR THE “FRIENDS OF VETERANS CANADA” AND THE “VETERANS VIDEO LIBRARY ONLINE”

Location/Setup

Type of room – Select a quiet room in the person's home where they can be comfortably seated. The interviewer will sit next to the camera across from the person at the same eye level. When the interviewee talks, he/she should be looking into the camera while speaking.

Backgrounds/lighting - Never have a window or bright light behind the person. Light sources should come from behind the camera or to the side of the interviewee. The videographer should preview the shot to make sure that the lighting is sufficient. Avoid any background noises, e.g. radio/TV turned off, interviewee's pets placed elsewhere, close the windows to eliminate street sounds, etc.

Distance from subject - Since the microphone is built into the camera, it should not be set up more than 5 feet from the interviewee. (We cut string into five-foot lengths and kept them with each camera. Students used them to measure the maximum distance from the camera to the interviewee.) You should have a clear shot of the person from chest to head.

Slating the interview - Before the interview, prepare an identification slate with the person's name/the date of interview/name of the interviewer. Print the information boldly so it will be clearly readable. You will record the slate at the beginning of the interview. Hold up the slate in front of the person for about 1 minute at the start of the taping process. (This will also give the videographer a chance to make focus adjustments and gauge the lighting quality).

Using the Camera

The videographer should be very familiar with the operation of the camera prior to the interview. At the start of each interview, check the lighting, framing, and other visual elements. Make any adjustments if needed before the interview gets rolling. Some skills to practice:

Set-up of Tripod - Become adept at checking for proper height, secure placement, and making adjustments.

Focusing - Most video cameras have automatic focus, but become familiar with its adjustment system.

Zooming - You may need to zoom in for a close-up of photos or possessions that the interviewee wishes to share on camera.

Framing - The interviewee should be slightly to one side of the center of the shot. You should see the person's body from the chest up to the head. Leave some space above the head in the shot.

Pausing - Be able to pause the video taping in case of phone calls, unexpected visitors, or other unplanned events during the interview.

Troubleshooting / Hazards To Avoid

Interviewee gives answers that seem too brief - Allow more time for the person to answer each question. If you don't ask the next question, they may fill in the silence with more details.

Lighting problems - If the videographer feels the light is too dim, add another light source or move to a different room. Again, never have a light source directly behind your interviewee.

Seating - Suggest the best place for the person to sit. Keep the background as simple and uncluttered as possible. Make sure there is a color contrast between the person and their seat (someone dressed in dark blue clothing on a dark blue sofa will look like a "floating head" on tape). Avoid rocking chairs (the person might bob in and out of your frame).

Date/time - If your camera has a date/time feature, turn it off before taping the interview.

Unexpected noise sources - Refrigerators, air conditioners, and aquariums may start making noise in the middle of the interview and are louder than you think. Select a location that will most likely remain quiet.

Glasses - Many older persons wear glasses which will reflect light and detract from their videotaped image. If the videographer finds excessive glare from glasses at the start of the interview, re-locate your light source or move the camera tripod slightly.

Batteries charged - Always make sure the battery for the video camera is charged. Just in case, keep a household extension cord in your camera kit.

Video cameras: Recording Words and Pictures

If you're recording an oral history interview with a video camera, here are some secrets for success.

- Use a tripod for the video camera and make sure it's placed in the least distracting spot you can find.
- If your video camera has a light that flashes when it's recording, place a piece of black electrical tape over it. This light can be distracting to your subject and is a constant reminder that the camera is rolling.
- Pick a room that's brightly lit, or use lots of lights to ensure the best quality picture. But don't have the subject sit in front of a window, which will cause everything in front of it to photograph too dark. Do a "screen test" with the subject to make sure the lighting and sound are acceptable.
- Have visual materials ready (photographs, artifacts, historical documents) so you can get these items on the video when the narrator begins talking about them.
- Punch the tab on the tape as soon as you take it out of the camera, so it can't be accidentally recorded over with next week's "E.R."
- Make a copy of the tape and store in a cool, dry place.

VIDEO TAPING TECHNIQUES

ROLES OF CREW MEMBERS (if necessary)

Here is a suggestion for how to organize a video-taping team of three students.

Interviewer – Put the interviewee at ease. Keep the person relaxed. Maintain your focus on them in order to ask follow-up questions as needed. Responsible for the quality of the interviewing process.

Cameraperson (Videographer) – Set up video equipment. Responsible for quality of videotape recording. See VIDEO TAPING SKILLS (below) for additional details.

Grip (Assistant to videographer in setup of equipment and lighting) – Responsible for seeing that the release form is signed, the interview gets the correct identification slate, and that the entire process runs smoothly. Help set up the video equipment. See VIDEO TAPING SKILLS for additional details. Listen to interview and double-check the list of questions to make sure that they were all asked. Also listen to sounds to maintain as quiet a recording environment as possible.

Back drops:

If you are recording a video at the legion, please use the awards wall as a backdrop, if you can include a Canadian flag in the background.

If you are recording at the veterans home please stay away from windows. Pick a wall with memorabilia or some nice pictures as a backdrop.

If you are recording in a hospital please be aware of bright lights in the background, try to go to an area in the hospital that has a nice background. If you cannot move the veteran out of their room film the story in the room. The story is what is important.

Please use these baseline questions,

Name.

Regiment the veterans served.

Rank.

Places and the years the veteran served.

Wounds (if any) and what battle the wound was inflicted.

Let the story flow out, let the veteran talk. Try not to interrupt unless you can spark a memory, then let the veteran tell the story.

Let the tape run we can edit the tape later.

Send the entire tape to us and we will make sure that the important parts are posted on the web site.

Please include your name and association with the veteran as the person that recorded the tape.

If you uploading the story please include all the tape recorded. You never know what can be used so send everything.

Please note that all tapes sent in or uploaded to the "Friends of Veterans Canada" or the "Online Video Library Online" will become the sole property of The Friends of Veterans Canada and the "Veterans Video Library Online".

Thank you

Randy Honcho Young

President Of Friend of Veterans Canada