

Guidelines for Interviewers

- **Always be polite and respectful.**
- Double check to make sure your voice recorder is working correctly prior to starting each interview.
- Explain up front that you will be recording the interview, but then you are best off to not call attention to it again. It makes the subject more at ease.
- If you are interviewing someone you know be extra careful not to fall into personal shorthand and omit background facts because the two of you don't need to mention it. Others will not have your shared experience.
- If you question a comment, date, or name because of your previous research, try to suggest or gently steer for clarification, rather than disagree.
- Don't get into delicate areas of personal life that would make someone uncomfortable.
- Use your good sense to improvise questions that will elicit the best responses.
- Don't ever feel tied down to the suggested questions list, if the subject mentions something that you wish to follow up on, by all means, do.
- We are looking for good storytellers, so let the people talk if you feel it is going somewhere.
- If the subject is talking about a specific building, make sure to get an address, intersection or as precise a location as possible.
- Don't forget to ask if the subject has old photographs or other mementos (menus, beer mats, matchbooks, etc.) that would be interesting additions to the published history. We will make an appointment to come scan them so they never leave the owner's possession.
- One of the goals of this project is to preserve Houston's history through the personal stories of these interview subjects. To that end, these tapes will eventually be saved in a publicly accessible archive like the Houston Metropolitan Research Collection at the Houston Public Library. While you are talking to your subject, consider that someone might be using these interviews for research purposes ten, fifty or hundred years from now.
- Above all - let your subject talk. Your job is to guide the interview and jump start things when they stall, and most definitely to have fun.