Oral history interviews are guided by a process of listening and questioning. Oral historians recommend using an “interview guide” to keep the interview on course. The majority of prominent oral historians recommend that the interview guide be topical and flexible. It is not necessary to list exact questions that the interviewer intends to ask in a prescribed or verbatim manner. What’s most important is that the topics that are intended to be covered actually are covered. Compare the “interview guide” model to the following standard “interview protocol” that asks specific questions in a specific order: [http://braceroarchive.org/BorderPatrolInterviewGuide.pdf](http://braceroarchive.org/BorderPatrolInterviewGuide.pdf)

What appears below is an example of an interview guide for an oral history project at California University of Pennsylvania, titled, “Cal U Women of Accomplishment.” It is important for interviewers as well as researchers, teachers, and students to know as much as possible about an oral history project. Doing so helps interviewers to develop appropriate topics for discussion, and helps researchers, teachers, and students better grasp the overall context of an oral history interview.

Project Description: “In order to preserve their legacies, share their stories, and inspire other women to pursue worthy and noble goals, we are compiling oral histories of women who have achieved notable accomplishments at Cal U. We are focusing on the areas of women’s education, work, politics/community involvement, and other topics.”

**GENERAL BACKGROUND (FAMILY, EARLY CHILDHOOD, ETC)**

1) Name of interviewee

2) Place of birth and date

3) Family life (history, members, cultural activities, occupations)

4) World views (politics, religion)

**EDUCATION/CAL U**

5) Date of matriculation and first campus experience

6) Reason for coming to Cal U

7) Major course of study (traditional or nontraditional for your gender)?

8) Year of graduation

9) Challenges to finishing educational program

10) Treatment by others (students, faculty, outside elders, etc.) as a female college student

11) Sources of encouragement
12) Post-graduation employment options

13) Impact of Cal U experience on life

14) Major historical events during years at Cal U

**PROFESSIONAL LIFE**

15) "Take me from your time at Cal U to what you did next."

16) "Share with us your career path from that point on."

17) "How have you balanced different priorities, responsibilities, roles, and interests in your career/life?"

18) "Can you share with us any gender barriers that you have encountered in your career/life?"

19) "Describe any personal/professional sacrifices you made along the way. Characterize the benefits of your chosen path."

**POLITICS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

20) Sense of political awareness and participation

21) Community and/or organizational involvement

**CULTURAL ASPECTS**

22) What was considered fashionable when you were a young college-aged woman?

23) Favorite musical group / song. Participation in dances or concerts attended

**INTERVIEW CONCLUSION**

24) Conception of success

25) Advice and hopes for women of today and future generations

26) Life regrets

27) Are there any significant topics/memories that we may not have discussed that you would like to include?