

UPLINK Oral History Project Guide

How to plan an oral history project

Planning your oral history interview or oral history project ahead of time is essential for success. Tailoring your questions to a specific person's life, to answer a particular research question, or to document a specific event in your community's history will lead to better results than simply asking what comes to mind in the moment.

There are many great resources online about conducting oral history projects, so I did not see a need to write an UPLINK-specific guide. And as always, if you have any questions or need help designing an oral history project, UPLINK staff are happy to help!

Oral History Resources:

- Southern Oral History Project: A Practical Guide to Oral History:
https://sohp.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/69/2020/02/01_A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History_SOHP_2018.pdf
 - A great guide to every stage in an oral history project: planning, research, interview, and post-interview. A few items are specific to their institution, but most of it applies to any oral history project. I highly recommend starting here and thinking through each of their "Before You Begin" questions.
- The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide:
<https://folklife.si.edu/the-smithsonian-folklife-and-oral-history-interviewing-guide/smithsonian>
 - A good overview of how to do oral history. If you're interested in conducting general life history interviews, I strongly recommend taking a look at their "Possible Questions" list to get inspiration.
- Web Guides to Oral History: <https://oralhistory.org/web-guides-to-doing-oral-history/>
 - If you really want to explore, this site has links to many different oral history resources.

Oral history release forms

If you want to be able to share and publish the oral history interview, the interviewer and the interviewee MUST sign a release form.

Here is our standard oral history release form. If necessary, you can add to it for your purposes.

Oral History Release Form

I, _____, (referred to within as the interviewee), hereby donate this interview to UPLINK (the Upper Peninsula Digital Network) as an unrestricted gift. With this gift, I hereby transfer to UPLINK legal title, property rights, and copyright to the interviews, recorded music, and conversations made by myself and the interviewer (if applicable) on the specified date; and any written summaries or copies thereof; and any documentation accompanying the recordings. I represent and warrant that the interview does not infringe on any third parties' rights including, but not limited to, copyright, trademark, rights of privacy, rights of publicity, or other personal or proprietary rights. I further represent and warrant that my interview does not plagiarize a third party.

I understand the interview may be made available for research and such public programming as UPLINK may determine. This may include use of the interview in any lawful way including publication, use in live or recorded programs for radio, television, and cable, or any other items of electronic publishing that is not for profit, except for any conditions stipulated below. The interviews may not be published, broadcast, cablecast, or electronically published for commercial purposes without my written consent, or that of my designee.

UPLINK may transcribe, duplicate, microfilm, digitize, or make available electronically and online these materials and may produce further copies within the limits of Federal copyright laws.

Interviewee:

NAME	PHONE:
ADDRESS:	E-MAIL:

CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE:	OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION:
------------------------	----------------------------

Interviewer:

NAME	PHONE:
ADDRESS:	E-MAIL:
CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE:	OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION:

Interview Information:

Interviewer Background Information:

General Topic of Interview:		
Date(s) of Interview:	Place(s) of Interview:	Length of Interview:
Media Format:	Number of Audiotapes/Videotapes/ Discs/Portable Media:	Transcript/Abstract Provided:
Correct Spelling of Persons and Places Discussed (per interviewer's notes):		
Restrictions on the use of and/or access to this collection:		

Special Disposition Instructions:

Special Conditions as specified by the donor:

Interviewee Signature

Date

Interviewer Signature

Date

Agent for UPLINK Signature

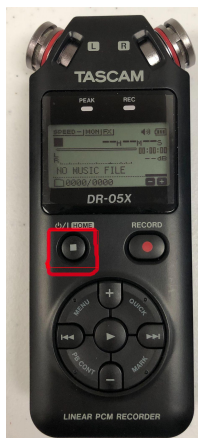
Date

How to make a recording

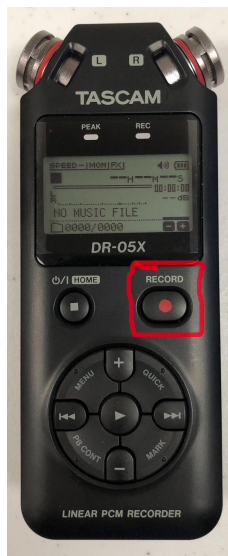
Before we jump into the step-by-step guide, a few general tips:

- Make sure you practice with the equipment ahead of time so that you are comfortable with it during the interview.
- Check the battery level before you start recording!
- Bring extra batteries! (If you're using our recorder, there are extra batteries in the back pocket of the bag.)

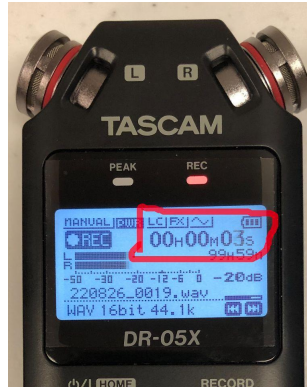
1. Turn on the recorder by holding down the power button:



2. To start recording, press the "Record" button twice.



3. Confirm that the recorder is recording by checking that the time in the upper-right-hand corner is moving.

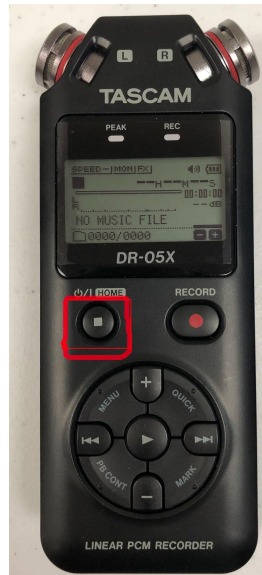


4. To ensure that you do not accidentally turn off the recorder during the interview, slide the hold button on the side of the recorder:



5. Place the recorder so that the two microphones are directed towards your interviewee and towards you.
6. Start the interview with an introductory statement such as, “My name is [your name], and I am conducting an oral history interview with [name of interviewee], on [date] at [location of interview].”
7. Conduct the interview. (See the “How to Plan” section for resources on writing questions, asking follow-ups, etc.)

8. When you are ready to stop recording, press the slide button back down to turn off the hold and then press the Stop button.



9. As soon as possible, back the recording up on a computer using the instructions below.

How to transfer a recording to a computer

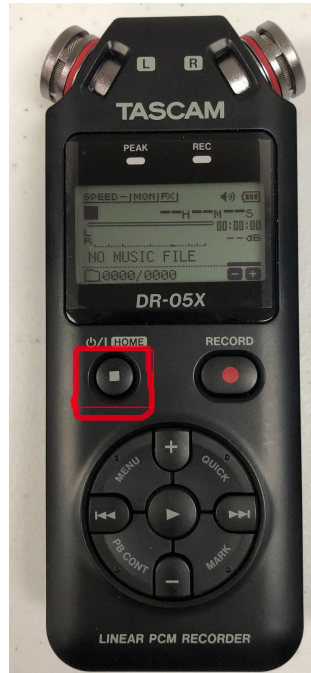
If you prefer a video, see this video from Tascam showing how to transfer files:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuI6N-SLKIU>

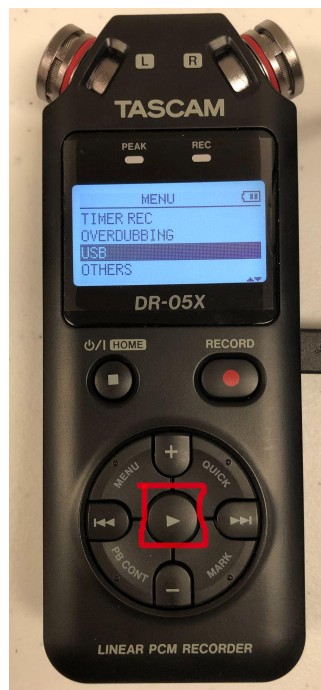
1. Plug the transfer cord into the side of the recorder and plug the USB end into a computer.



2. Turn on the recorder by holding down the power button:



3. Click Menu. Use the Down Arrow (looks like a minus sign) to navigate down to the “USB” option and then click the center “Play” button.



4. A new menu like the one below should pop up. Click the center “play” button again to select “SD Card Reader.”



5. On the computer, go to File Explorer. The recorder should now show up in the list of “Devices and Drives.” Open the folder and go into the “Music” folder. You should see all of the recordings that you made. Copy and paste them to your computer.

Transcribing oral history interviews

If desired, you can create a transcript of your oral history interview to be donated with the audio recording of the interview. Transcripts make oral histories much more accessible and easier to search, but creating them can be time-consuming. A good transcriber can typically get through about 15 minutes of audio in one hour.

Transcription Resources:

- Guilford College Oral History Transcription Guide:
<https://library.guilford.edu/c.php?g=111767&p=722621>
 - A quick list of transcription tips and best practices.
- Recollection Wisconsin: <https://recollectionwisconsin.org/the-toolkit-transcription-tips>
 - A great list of tools to help with transcribing oral histories.