

Introduction

About StoryCorps

StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit whose mission is to provide people of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of our lives. Since 2003, StoryCorps has collected and archived more than 50,000 interviews from more than 90,000 participants. Each conversation is recorded on a free CD to share, and is preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. StoryCorps is one of the largest oral history projects of its kind, and millions listen to our weekly broadcasts on NPR's *Morning Edition* and on our website and podcast.

We do this to remind one another of our shared humanity, to strengthen and build the connections between people, to teach the value of listening, and to weave into the fabric of our culture the understanding that every life matters. At the same time, we will create an invaluable archive of voices and wisdom for future generations.



How to Describe StoryCorps

A StoryCorps interview is 40 minutes of uninterrupted time for meaningful conversation. The model of a StoryCorps interview is simple, but it can be hard to explain to participants, especially to anyone who isn't familiar with our stories on NPR. Exhibit 3 outlines the interview process step-by-step, and here are some important points to make sure to mention.

KEY FACTS ABOUT STORYCORPS

More of a conversation, and less of a formal interview

We encourage participants to tell stories from their personal experiences. Personal experiences describe vivid memories or reflections on the impact of significant people or events—not simply dates, places, and chronologies. For that reason, we try to avoid using the term “oral history” and refer to the experience more as a “conversation” during which participants are free to ask questions back and forth, and talk about whatever they want.

Participants are the interviewers

While our Facilitators are trained to interview participants who do come alone, the best StoryCorps interviews take place between two people who know each other well. The significance of the relationship between the participants can greatly increase the quality of their experience and of the stories told.

The interviews are not scripted

Participants should not expect to rehearse or read from notes. We encourage creating question lists to aid participants who would like some prompting, but participants should be prepared to be spontaneous and flexible in their conversation. Participants are encouraged to talk about their personal experiences of your museum or library, but they are not required to do so. Depending on

whom you invite, some of the participants may focus specifically on their relationship to your organization, while others may discuss broader topics.

Participants decide whether or not to archive their interview

Each participant pair receives a recording of their conversation immediately after the interview. In order to have their interview archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and given to your organization, participants must sign our release form. The choice to sign the form is entirely up to the participant. The participants will decide after the interview if they want to sign the consent form.

Very few interviews air on NPR

Fewer than 1% of StoryCorps interviews are edited for broadcast on NPR's *Morning Edition*.

Exhibit 1: The StoryCorps Interview Step-by-Step

A StoryCorps interview is 40 minutes of uninterrupted time to record a meaningful conversation with someone important to you. Here's what you can expect in an interview:

STEP 1

Welcome – The Facilitator will welcome you, explain his or her role, and set up the recording equipment. He or she will also give you reminders about the interview process and answer any questions you may have.



STEP 2

Logistics – The Facilitator will walk you through the initial paperwork, which asks for basic personal information such as your name, address, and ethnic background.



STEP 3

Sound check – Once you and your interview partner are ready to proceed, the Facilitator will ensure you are positioned well for recording, check the audio levels, and make sure you feel comfortable in the recording space.



STEP 4

The interview – While you and your partner are talking, the Facilitator will keep time, monitor the audio, and may take notes. Facilitators are not interviewers, though they may ask a question during the interview.



STEP 5

Release form – When the interview is over, the Facilitator will give you a copy of the interview on CD. He or she will also explain the Release form, which allows StoryCorps to keep one copy and archive another at the Library of Congress.



STEP 6

Photos – With your permission, the Facilitator will take photos of you and your interview partner, both together and separately. These photos will be included in the archive at the Library of Congress, and a copy will be given to your local StoryCorps Door-to-Door host.

