



10 TIPS FOR THE PERFECT CONVERSATION

- 1 Plan your questions**

Before you arrive, review our question prompts or write your own, and then share them with your story partner. This prep will help you get the most out of your time together.
- 2 Ask warm-up questions**

Introduce yourself and your partner, and then ask warm-up questions such as “Where were you born?” or “Can you describe the first time we met?”
- 3 Ask open-ended questions**

Avoid yes/no questions. Instead, use language like “Tell me about...” or “What was it like when...” This lets the storyteller steer you toward what is most important to them.
- 4 Ask follow-up questions**

Be prepared to ask follow-ups or diverge from your question list if you’re curious about something. Try “And then what happened?” or “How did that make you feel?”
- 5 Remember: this is a conversation**

Use your selected questions as a guide, not a script. If your partner goes off topic, go with it. There’s no right or wrong thing to talk about, as long as it’s meaningful to you.
- 6 Tell a story**

Don’t hesitate to tell a story about your partner, and to bring up your favorite shared memories. This can be a time to tell your partner why you wanted to record with them.
- 7 Set up context**

It’s unlikely listeners will be familiar with the specific people and places you mention. Set up context where needed with questions like “Who was John? Why was he such an influence on you?”
- 8 Encourage vivid details**

Ask questions that encourage vivid details. “What images stand out when you think about Homecoming?” will invoke the senses for your partner.
- 9 Plan some reflective questions**

Try to end your conversation with reflective questions, such as “What legacy would you like to leave?” or “What advice would you give me about life after IU?”
- 10 Relax and let the conversation flow**

Enjoy the opportunity to share stories and reflections. Be yourself, be curious, and have fun.