

How to Grill your Granny

Or Questions to ask Older Relatives

If you live with or near your older relatives, you can ask them questions in person. Often our families don't live close by, so you may have to phone them, or speak to them online. You could also send them a list of questions and ask them to write down the answers. You need to find a way of recording all the information that they give you. It is hard to remember everything and if you are asking the questions, it is difficult to write notes at the same time. You could ask if they would mind if you recorded the conversation. You can record using your phone, or by recording a Zoom call, for example, then you can listen back to your chat and make sure you have all the information.

Remember that people's memories are like their property. You can't take them and do what you like with them. Make it clear why you are asking the questions and what you are going to do with the information. You certainly can't put a recording online or on social media without asking.

Here are just some of the questions that you might like to ask but you can add your own. Remember that there may be some questions that your relatives don't want to answer and that's fine.

What is your full name?

Do you have any nicknames?

Where and when were you born?

What was your house like when you were a child?
Tell me about the places you have lived.
What are your parents' names?
Where and when were they born?
What are the names of your brothers and sisters?
How did you meet your husband/wife/partner?
Tell me about where you used to live.
Tell me about your schooldays.
What games and toys did you enjoy when you were young?
What jobs have you had?
What are your hobbies?
Do you have any stories about your parents?
What were your grandparents' names?
Where and when were they born?
Tell me about some of the times that you spent with your grandparents.
Do you know the names of any earlier family members?
Do you have any old family photographs that I could look at and perhaps copy?
Do you have any family heirlooms that I could look at?
Who else can I ask about our family's history?

This is a very long list, so you may want to have more than one conversation.