

Parents, Grandparents & Ancestors

For writing people who may be known through fragments, stories, documents and inherited habits.

This is preparation, not homework. You do not need complete dates, perfect memory, or a box of scanned records. Circle what helps. Leave the rest. Uncertainty is part of an honest history.

Before we speak

- Separate what you personally remember from what you were told.
- Record nicknames and naming traditions.
- List the traits or sayings that seem to have travelled down generations.
- Note mysteries without trying to solve them before the interview.

Gather only if it is easy

- Birth, marriage and death records
- Immigration or naturalization records
- Gravestone photographs and cemetery information
- Portraits, letters and family recipes

Prompts worth thinking about

- What did people say your grandmother was like?
- Whose temper, humour or hands do you have?
- Which ancestor became a legend in the family?
- What do you know only because one person happened to tell you?
- What remains unknown?

Set your boundaries first

Before the interview, decide what may be explored, what should be handled carefully, and what is off limits. You can change those boundaries later. A useful history does not require surrendering privacy.

After the first conversation

No quotation is given before the first conversation. If the project is a fit, use the Story Mixer to show the balance you want - emotional depth, humour, intimacy, historical context, voice and boundaries. I then assess the actual scope and normally send a written quotation within 24 hours.

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