Current & Recent Activities:
First off, would you introduce yourself?
Tell us what favorite activity you are going to talk about for this interview.

Beginnings:
What is your first memory of doing this activity?
How did you get started?
Who got you interested in this activity?

Biography:
Give us a bit of family background and tell us if other people in your family are involved in this activity.

Education / Transitions
Did you ever take formal lessons in this activity?
Have you done this activity in public, (i.e. sporting event, exhibition, or performance, etc.)?
When did you make your first public appearance?
Where did you make your first public appearance?
What did you do next to become better at this activity?
What is the easiest way for you to become better at this activity?

Process:
How do you prepare (sports: warm-ups, drills, etc. arts: prep materials, practice, etc.)?
What do you usually do first?
What are the easiest parts for you?
What are the hardest parts?
What do you do if things are not going well? How do you solve problems?
When do you know you are done?

Performance:
What was one of your most successful times doing this activity?
What was one of your most challenging or disappointing times doing this activity?
How do you feel when you do this activity?

The Community
Do you belong to any groups, teams, or associations?
What is helpful or not helpful about being part of this group?
Is there any sense of camaraderie between people who do this activity?
How have things changed over the years?

Wrap-up:
Any advice for someone who wants to try this activity?
Looking back over your involvement in this activity, do any particular high points come to mind?
Do you have any final thoughts you’d like to share?
The classmate I am going to interview is______________________________________________________________

What s/he wants to talk about is_____________________________________________________________________

The ten questions I plan to ask are:

1.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

2.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

3.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

4.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

5.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

6.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

7.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

8.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

9.   __________________________________________________________________________________________

10. __________________________________________________________________________________________

Now that I have completed the interview:

The easiest part of the interview was ________________________________________________________________

The hardest part of the interview was ________________________________________________________________

Next time, the questions...

I would change are _________________________________________________________________________________

I would add are ____________________________________________________________________________________

I would take away are ______________________________________________________________________________

I would change the order of the questions by _________________________________________________________
HANDOUT UNIT 2.3
Tips on How to Interview

(Reprinted with permission from the Oral History Association)

1. **Listen**
   An interview is not a dialogue. The whole point is to get the narrator to tell his/her story. Listen for clues and leads. Be alert and ready to follow up.

2. **Be curious**
   Ask the interviewee to explain things to you; define words and phrases you are not familiar with; describe physical things.

3. **Ask one question at a time**
   If the interviewee hears a string of questions, he/she usually only answers the first or last one.

4. **Smile and nod your head**
   Look at the narrator and encourage him with your eyes and body. If he thinks he is boring you, he’ll stop talking.

5. **Silence can be golden**
   Give your interviewee a chance to think of what s/he wants to say. Keep quiet and wait; count to yourself to ten slowly before asking another question or repeating the question. Relax and write a few words on your note pad.

6. **Do not interrupt a good story**
   But, if he digresses guide him back to the topic as politely as you can. You might say, “That’s very interesting, but I would like to hear more about….”

7. **Do not challenge or contradict the narrator**
   The interview is not an interrogation. You are just collecting as much information as possible that can be used.

8. **Try to avoid off-the-record information**
   Ask him to let you record the whole thing and promise him he can edit or have it erased later.

9. **End the interview at a reasonable time (usually 60 minutes)**
   Always ask if there is anything else she would like to talk about or go back to. Pause before thanking her and turning the recorder off.

10. **Thank the narrator and have him/her sign the release form**
    (A good example of an interview release form can be found in the The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide at [http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/Intervie.pdf](http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/Intervie.pdf))
1. Select a few artists that you are interested in interviewing. You can use the list of artists to contact in Experience Music Project’s Oral History Resources web page (address TBD) to find what local artists might be available to interview.

2. Research biographical information about the artists. From this information determine a first choice and a second choice artist to invite to interview.

3. Contact the artist and invite him or her to an interview. Use the suggestions below when contacting the artist.
   - Give your name and the name of your school.
   - Explain how you received his/her name and contact information.
   - Ask if this is a good time to speak with you.
   - Say you are contacting him/her about participating in an oral history project about artists for class. Explain that the project comes from a curriculum developed for EMP’s oral history program.
   - Ask if he/she would be interested in being interviewed.
   - Be prepared to answer questions about how long the interview will take, where the interview will take place, and what you want to discuss in the interview.
   - If there are any concerns from the artist about how the information from the interview will be used, be prepared to explain it is for class use only.
   - If the artist asks any questions that you do not know the answer to, do not make up an answer. Instead, tell him or her you will find out the answer and reply as soon as possible.
   - Wrap up the conversation by confirming interest in participating and letting him/her know you will send a brief questionnaire and any other information in advance of the interview (such as exact time and place of interview, directions, your contact information.)
HANDOUT UNIT 2.5
Sample Biographical Questionnaire

1. Where were you born?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Where did you go to school?
4. Did you have (art/music/theater, etc.) lessons in school?
5. How long did you study (art/music/theater, etc.)?
6. What have some of your past jobs been?
7. Where do you work now?
8. What kind of work do you do?
9. Any other information you would like me to know before our interview?

Check for Understanding Point
Thinking Skills: Research

☐ Did I research the background information of the artist I am going to interview in at least two different ways?

Comments: ________________________________

☐ Did I think about the differences between reading about this person’s background and asking about the background through a questionnaire?

Comments: ________________________________
FREE-WRITE
Consider some of the questions listed below and write what your expectations and/or concerns are for meeting and interviewing the artist.

• What are you most looking forward to in meeting and interviewing this artist?

• Do you have any concerns or fears about talking to this artist?

• What do you want to learn more about in talking to this artist?

• What do you, as the interviewer, bring to the interview? Do you think you are positive or negative about the artist before meeting him or her?

• What can you do to keep your opinions from affecting the interview?
(adapted from Oral History Association guidelines with permission to reprint)

Use this list of the different types of interview questions to guide you in writing your own questions. Write one main question and one follow-up for each type. All questions except ones used to identify specific facts like name, date, or time period should be open-ended (meaning there is no correct answer).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Sample Question</th>
<th>Your Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Why</td>
<td>Why did this happen?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How</td>
<td>How did you feel about that?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Suggestive</td>
<td>You said..., can you tell me more about that?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reflective, to ask for more detail</td>
<td>What else do you think about...?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Descriptive</td>
<td>Could you describe...?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Definition</td>
<td>Would you explain what... means?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Third person</td>
<td>What were other people doing...?</td>
<td>Main:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students should also keep in mind the following guidelines while developing and asking interview questions:

1. Avoid yes or no questions.
2. Be prepared with follow-up questions that deepen the answer and/or get more perspective.
3. Make sure you are not asking leading questions, steering the answer in a certain way.
4. Specific questions can bring out more interesting answers.
5. Think about the order of the questions so that they go from more general to more specific.

Check for Understanding Point

Thinking Skills: Reflection and Communication

☐ Did I think about what I expected of this interview and any biases or misconceptions I may have?

Comments: ________________________________________________________________

☐ Did I develop different types of questions that followed the guidelines of good questioning?

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
Peer-assessment: Trade your transcribed interview with a fellow student. Review his or her interview and answer the following questions. Then share your answers with the interviewer.

1. Which part of the interview was most informative to you?

2. What surprised you?

3. Where did you think your fellow student did a particularly good job at asking a follow-up question or getting more information from the interviewee?

4. What are the similarities and differences between the kinds of questions you asked an artist and the ones your fellow student did?

5. What are the similarities and differences between the kinds of answers you and your fellow student got?

6. Can you hypothesize about any trends in these answers? Are there similar qualities about being an artist that come through by reading the interviews?

Check for Understanding Point
Thinking Skills: Reflection and Communication

☐ Did I research the background information of the artist I am going to interview in at least two different ways?

Comments: ____________________________________________

☐ Did I think about the differences between reading about this person’s background and asking about the background through a questionnaire?

Comments: ____________________________________________