



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Oral History Do's and Don'ts

Remember: Good interviewers don't shine; only their interviews do!

- **Don't talk too much.** You are there to record someone else's experiences, not talk about yourself. Take some time to chat with your elder partner before you start the interview so that you're comfortable with each other.
- **Do ask open-ended questions.**
 - Start questions with *who, what, when, where, why* or *how*.
 - Try to avoid asking "Yes-or-no" questions. ("Do you like cats? Is that barn red?") Those will only give you one-word answers!
 - Ask one question at a time.
- **Do be a good listener.** Do maintain eye contact. Don't look bored or disinterested, and NEVER yawn!
- **Don't interrupt.** If you think of a question, write it down, and ask it later.
- **Do try to get specific details.**
 - **Remember to ask *who, what, when, where, why* or *how* questions.**
 - Remember that the more you ask, the more you will learn.