

Oral History Supplies

Audio recorder

A digital audio recorder is the most practical. A good medium-priced recorder can run about \$200. Avoid very cheap ones and do not try to use your phone, but there is no need to spend a lot of money either. Stereo is not necessary but can be achieved with the built-in microphones or use of a stereo external microphone. The resulting recording should be transferred to another source such as a PC or Mac device for long-term storage. It should be saved as a WAVE file (uncompressed) for the highest quality of audio. Convert to or save an MP3 file (compressed) for use on a web site later. The two examples below record on easily accessible SD or SDHC cards allowing the user to switch to a new card when one is full.

- **Roland R-05 WAVE/MP3 Pocket Recorder.** The pocket-sized R-05 is small and easy to use, and includes features most often associated with higher-priced recorders. A number of enhanced recording and editing features are included along with extended battery life (over 16 hours per charge). The R-05 has the ability to record in either WAVE or MP3 format, or both at the same time. The Roland records two tracks in stereo with two built-in microphones that provide excellent quality, but also includes a jack for an external microphone(s). Recordings may be transferred to PC or Mac computers for storage and editing. Jacks for headphones, line-in for external audio sources and line-out for editing are included.
See: <http://www.roland.com/products/r-05/specifications/>
- **TASCAM DR-40.** The compact DR-40 includes adjustable microphones, four-track recording and extended battery life for the flexibility needed to record tracks anywhere. The DR-40 captures up to four tracks from built-in, high-quality condenser microphones, XLR mic or line inputs, in either WAVE or MP3 format. The internal mics are adjustable, helping the interviewer to tailor the recording to the sound of the room. The DR-40 accepts SD or SDHC cards up to 32GB, and a 2GB card is included.
See: <http://tascam.com/product/dr-40/>

Microphones (2)

The best ones are the small clip-on types that attach to clothing or hang around neck, called lavalier microphones. They pick up the interviewee's voice clearly and without much interference. Use one for the interviewee and one for the interviewer. Prices run about \$17.99 for an Olympus Lavalier Microphone, Model 145055, from Best Buy. Use of the built-in microphones included in the recommended digital recorders is OK, since the quality of these microphones is far better than the ones that were included in the old cassette tape recorders.

Microphone splitter

A splitter will be necessary, when there is only one microphone jack, and the interviewer wants to use two microphones. The microphones plug into the splitter and the splitter plugs into the recorder input jack. Price is about \$5 from Best Buy.

SD Cards

These are available at many locations such as drugstores, grocery stores, convenience stores and discount stores. Various capacities are available, but 16 MB is usually enough for most recordings and they can be cleared by transferring the recording to a computer for permanent storage.

Notebook

A stenographers pad is good since it has two columns. One can be used for the questions or interview topics while the other can be used to jot down notes on the responses.

Extension cord

Outlets are often not where you need them. Take an extension cord along.

Batteries

You may need extra batteries – both for the recorder and for the microphones. Take them along in case you do. If there is no outlet handy, you will need to use the recorder's battery. This is usually fine for a one to two-hour interview, but just make sure the battery has a full charge and take along some extras.

Interview questions

Take along an outline of how you want to conduct the interview. Include a list of questions or subjects for the interview in the order in which you plan to use them. Be flexible, however; you may have to adjust to the interviewee.

Release form

Use this when interviewing people other than family members or in cases where you plan to publish or broadcast the results. An example follows.