

Questions to ask your grandparents

52 questions that get stories. Pick two or three, ask one at a time, and let them talk.

Childhood and home

1. What's the first house you remember? Walk me through the front door.
2. What did your kitchen smell like on a Sunday?
3. Who lived with you growing up, and what was each of them like?
4. What chores did you have, and which one did you try hardest to get out of?
5. What was the naughtiest thing you ever got away with?
6. What did you do on summer evenings when you were ten?
7. Was there a neighbor or relative everyone talked about?
8. What was your town like then? What's gone now that you miss?
9. What did your family do for holidays?
10. What's a smell or sound that takes you straight back to being a kid?
11. What games did you play outside, and who always won?
12. What was the best present you ever got as a child?

Parents and grandparents

13. What do you know about where our family came from?
14. What was your mother like when she laughed?
15. What did your father do for work, and what did he say about it?
16. What's something your parents always said that you still hear in your head?
17. What did your grandparents teach you, on purpose or by accident?
18. Is there a family story that's told differently depending on who tells it?

School and growing up

19. Which teacher do you still remember, and why?
20. Who was your best friend, and what did you two get up to?
21. What did you want to be when you grew up?
22. What was your first job, and what did you do with the money?
23. When did you first feel like an adult?
24. What music did you love, and where did you hear it?

Love and marriage

25. How did you meet Grandma (or Grandpa)? What did you notice first?
26. What was your first date? Who paid?
27. How did the proposal happen? Did anything go wrong?
28. What was your wedding day like, weather and all?
29. What was hard about the first year together?
30. What's the secret to staying together, honestly?

Work and service

31. What jobs have you had, from the first to the last?
32. What was the hardest day at work you can remember?
33. Who was the best boss you ever had? The worst?
34. Did you serve in the military? Where did it take you, and who did you serve with?
35. What are you proudest of having built, fixed or made?
36. What did a day's pay buy back then?
37. What's a skill you had to learn the hard way?

Raising a family

38. What do you remember about the day your first child was born?

- 39. What was a normal weeknight like when the kids were small?
- 40. What was the hardest part of being a parent?
The best part?
- 41. What's a family trip or disaster everyone still laughs about?
- 42. What did you worry about that turned out fine?

Hard times and big moments

- 43. Where were you when big news broke, the kind everyone remembers?
- 44. What was a hard year, and what got you through it?
- 45. Is there a decision you'd make differently now?

- 46. Who did you lose too soon, and what do you want us to know about them?

Looking back

- 47. What are you proudest of?
- 48. What do you know now that you wish you'd known at twenty?
- 49. What's changed most in the world since you were young? What's stayed the same?
- 50. What do you hope we remember about you?
- 51. What would you like your great-grandchildren to know?
- 52. What makes a good life, in your experience?

From StorySitting (storysitting.com/guides). Don't want to do the asking? Kaylie, a patient AI interviewer, can call them and turn the conversation into a chapter in their own words.