Questions to ask

Meaningful questions to ask elderly family members to build relationships

Growing up, I only saw my grandparents twice a year and would beg to hear their stories whenever I got the chance to be with them. My grandfather was candid and loved to laugh about his wild misadventures, like being stuck on top of a train car during the great Kansas City flood of 1951. Or how when he was in his 20s, he drove Elvis Presley through Germany.

My grandmother was more demure, preferring to tell stories about my mother and uncles, but only when prompted. At 16, she was crowned the Watermelon Queen of Georgia and had her picture taken with the president in a dress she sewed herself.

I wouldn’t have known any of these unique stories had I not asked questions, and knowing what questions to ask elderly loved ones isn’t always easy. Here are some interesting topics to talk about with seniors and questions to help you bridge the generational gap with your older loved ones:

Questions about when they were young

* What do you remember about the place you grew up? Do they still live there, or have they visited? If so, how has it changed?
* Which invention from your lifetime are you most amazed by? What was life like before? Their generation witnessed the invention of color TV, personal computers, the Internet, and more.
* What’s the weirdest fad you remember? Is it swallowing goldfish, pet rocks or Jell-O™ salad? How about expressions or slang?
* What was your favorite movie when you were younger? Suggest watching it together! Streaming services like Turner Classic Movies and Criterion Collection offer large selections of old films, as do many local libraries.
* What was your first job? How about your favorite? My grandfather worked in a prison for 12 cents an hour!

Questions about family

* Do you know the history of your family name, crest, or origin? If they’ve always wanted to learn more, suggest a service like [Ancestry](https://www.ancestry.com/) to use together. You may be surprised by the results.
* What do you remember about your parents and grandparents? This is a special opportunity to learn more about family members you didn’t have the chance to meet.
* What were your children like growing up? Do they have any funny or embarrassing stories about Mom or Dad?
* What did you and your siblings do for fun? Maybe straight-laced Aunt Ruth was a huge troublemaker back in the day!
* How did you meet your spouse? Was it love at first sight or an uphill battle? What was the wedding like?

When you are ready to conduct an interview, have the questions in front of you to make sure you are getting the information you desire. Conversations about family can go many directions. When possible, record the interview on audio or video.

1. What is your full name and why were you named that? (Include maiden name for women.)
2. Were you named after someone else?
3. Did you have a nickname when you were growing up? If so, what was it and why were called that?
4. Have you had any other nicknames as an adult?
5. What do your family members call you now?
6. When and where were you born?
7. When were you baptized, and what was your religion?
8. What was the religion of your parents and your grandparents?
9. What church, if any, do you attend now?
10. What church do your parents and your grandparents attend?
11. Where was your first home?
12. In what other homes/places have you lived?
13. What were your earliest memories of your home?
14. Could you tell me a story or any memory of your brothers and sisters?
15. What are the full names of your brothers and sisters?
16. What did your family do for fun when you were a child?
17. Was there a chore you really hated doing as a child?
18. What kinds of books did you like to read?
19. Do you remember having a favorite nursery rhyme or bedtime story? What was it?
20. Do you remember not having enough food to eat because times were hard for your family?
21. What were your favorite toys and what were they like?
22. What were your favorite childhood games?
23. Were there any fads during your youth that you remember vividly?
24. Where did you attend grade school?
25. Where did you attend high school?
26. What were your schools like?
27. How did you like school?
28. What was your favorite subject in school and why?
29. What subject in school was the easiest for you?
30. What was your least favorite subject in school and why?
31. Who was your favorite teacher and why was he/she special?
32. How do your fellow classmates from school remember you best?
33. Did you get good grades?
34. What did you wear to school? Describe it.
35. What school activities and sports did you participate in?
36. Did you and your friends have a special hangout where you liked to spend time?
37. Where was it and what did you do there?
38. Were you ever given any special awards for your studies or school activities?
39. How many years of education have you completed?
40. Describe yourself as a young adult.
41. Did you attend any school or training after high school? If so, what was your field of study?
42. Do you have a college degree(s)?
43. As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
44. What was your first job?
45. How did you decide on a career?
46. What jobs have you had?
47. Did you make enough money to live comfortably?
48. How long did you have to work each day at your job?
49. How old were you when you retired? Or when do you want to retire or will be able to retire?
50. If you served in the military, when and where did you serve and what were your duties? Rank?
51. Were you ever injured in the line of duty?
52. How old were you when you started dating?
53. Do you remember your first date? Could you tell me something about it?
54. When, where and how did you first meet your present spouse?
55. Do you remember where you went on the first date with your spouse?
56. How long did you know him/her before you got married?
57. Describe your wedding proposal.
58. Where and when did you get married? (Include date, place, church, etc.)
59. Describe your wedding ceremony.
60. Who was there? Were there a best man, a bridesmaid, other wedding party members and who were they?
61. Did you have a honeymoon? Where did you go?
62. Were you married more than once? If so, answer the previous questions about each spouse.
63. How would you describe your spouse(s)?
64. What do (did) you admire most about them?
65. How long have you been or were you married?
66. When and where did your spouse die?
67. What advice would you give/did you give to your child or grandchild on his/her wedding day?
68. How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?
69. How many children did you have all together?
70. What were their names, birth dates and birthplaces?
71. Why did you give them the names that you did?
72. Do you remember anything your children did when they were small that really amazed you?
73. What is one of the most unusual things one of your children did regularly when they were small?
74. What was the funniest thing you can remember that one of your children said or did?
75. If you had to do it all over again, would you change the way you raised your family?
76. What did you find most difficult about raising children?
77. What did you find most rewarding about being a parent?
78. Did you spoil any of your children?
79. Were you strict or lenient as a parent?
80. Did you find you had to treat each of your children differently? If so, why?
81. How did you feel when the first of your children went to school for the first time?
82. How did you first hear that you were a grandparent and how did you feel about it?
83. What advice do you have for your children and grandchildren about being a parent?
84. Where did your spouse's parents live?
85. When and where did your parents die? What do you remember about it?
86. How did they die? Where were they hospitalized and buried?
87. What do you remember about the death of your spouse's parents?
88. Do you remember hearing your grandparents describe their lives? What did they say?
89. Do you remember your great-grandparents?
90. Who was the oldest person you remember as a child?
91. Did you have any of the childhood diseases?
92. Do you have any health problems that are considered hereditary?
93. What do you do regularly for exercise?
94. Do you have any bad habits now or in the past?
95. Have you ever been the victim of a crime?
96. Have you ever been in a serious accident?
97. Has anyone ever saved your life?
98. Have you ever been hospitalized? If so, what for?
99. Have you ever had surgery?
100. What would you consider the most important inventions during your lifetime?
101. Do you remember the first time you saw a television; a car; a refrigerator?
102. How is the world different from what it was like when you were a child?
103. Do you remember your family discussing world events and politics?
104. How would you describe yourself politically? Are you conservative or liberal, and why?
105. Do you remember what you or your parents thought about income tax when it began in 1913?
106. Do you remember anything about the days of Prohibition?
107. How did the Depression affect you?
108. What U.S. president have you admired the most and why?
109. What did you think of President Franklin D. Roosevelt? How did you react to his death?
110. How did you react to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?
111. What wars have been fought during your lifetime?
112. What were you doing when you heard the news of the Pearl Harbor bombing?
113. How did World War II affect you?
114. How did the Korean War affect you?
115. How did the Vietnam War affect you?
116. Name a good friend you have known the longest. How many years have you been friends?
117. Has there ever been anyone in your life you would consider a kindred spirit or soul mate? Who was he/she and why did you feel a special bond with him/her?
118. What were the hardest choices you ever had to make?
119. What person really changed the course of your life by something he/she did?
120. Do you remember any advice or comments that had a big impact on how you lived your life?
121. If you could change something about yourself, what would it be?
122. What is the most stressful experience you ever lived through?
123. What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?
124. What kinds of musical instruments have you learned to play?
125. Would you consider yourself creative?
126. What things have you made that others have enjoyed?
127. How would you describe your sense of humor?
128. What is the funniest practical joke you ever played on someone?
129. What activities have you especially enjoyed as an adult?
130. What are your hobbies?
131. What did you like to do when you were not working?
132. What is the most amazing thing that has ever happened to you?
133. Have you ever met any famous people?
134. Who were your parents? Please give full names.
135. Who were your grandparents? Please give full names.
136. Where were they from?
137. How do you feel about the choices you made in school, career, spouse?
138. What organizations or groups have you belonged to?
139. Have you ever won any special awards or prizes as an adult? What were they for?
140. Describe a time and a place you remember feeling truly at peace and happy to be alive. Where were you and what were you doing?
141. What is the most beautiful place you have ever visited and what was it like
142. What is the longest trip that you have ever gone on? Where did you go
143. What has been your favorite vacation? Where did you go and why was it special?
144. What was the favorite place you ever visited and what was it like?
145. What pets have you had? Do you have a favorite story about a pet?
146. Is there anything you have always wanted to do but haven't?
147. Have you ever been to a world's fair?
148. What is the single most memorable moment of your life?
149. What or who is your favorite:

* Animal?
* Artist?
* Athlete?
* Author?
* Board game?
* Book?
* Candy?
* Card game?
* Color?
* Cookie?
* Drink?
* Flavor of ice cream?
* Flower?
* Fruit?
* Holiday?
* Meal?
* Movie star?
* Movie?
* Musical group?
* Musical instrument?
* Painting?
* Poem?
* Poet?
* Restaurant?
* Season?
* Singer?
* Song?
* Sport?
* Style of music?
* Tree?
* TV program?
* Vegetable?
* 150. If you had to pick a label for your family members (spouse, children, mother, father, brothers, sister...), who fits each of the following descriptions? Animal lover
* Best cook
* Best gardener
* Best housekeeper
* Best looking
* Best memory
* Best story teller
* Biggest tease
* Calmest
* Funniest
* Hardest worker
* Most athletic
* Most colorful
* Most creative
* Most frugal
* Most generous
* Most mischievous
* Most politically active
* Most reclusive
* Most relaxed
* Most sociable
* Quietest
* Shortest
* Tallest

o, whether you are looking for Hinge date ice-breakers, ways to kill time on a road trip, or you want to [know your mom better](https://www.storii.com/blog/40-questions-to-ask-your-parents-before-they-die), here are 60 'If...' questions to get you started.

1. If you could go back and live one year of your life over again, without changing a thing, which would you choose?
2. If you had to be locked in a retail store overnight, which would you pick?
3. If you could be exceptionally talented at anything in the world, what would you choose?
4. If you had to pick the best kiss of your life, which one would win and why?
5. If you could plan out the last meal of your life, what would be on the menu?
6. If you had to live in one outfit for an entire year, what ensemble would you wear?
7. If you could eliminate one thing from your daily schedule what would it be and why?
8. If you could go anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?
9. If you could pick 5 people to have dinner with (dead or alive), who would you choose to be at your table?
10. If you could domesticate any animal and have it as a pet, what animal would you choose?
11. If you were a breakfast cereal, which one would you be and why?
12. If you could visit any period of history, when would it be and where would you go?
13. If you could speak any language fluently, which would you choose?
14. If you could meet any famous person, who would you choose and why?
15. If you could meet any historical figure, who would you choose and why?
16. If you could plan out the ideal Saturday what would you spend it doing?
17. If you knew you only had 1 week to live, what would you do with the time left?
18. If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do with the money?
19. If you could live perfectly well without sleeping, how would you spend all your nights?
20. If you were given the chance to go to the moon, would you go? Why or why not?
21. If you could only choose one memory to have of us together, which one would you choose?
22. If you could choose the very last thing you see before death, what would it be?
23. If you had to trade houses with someone you know, who would it be?
24. If you had to name one thing that scares you the most about growing old, what would it be?
25. If you could have any view in the world visible from your bedroom window, what would you choose?
26. If you could choose one thing to alter about human anatomy, what exciting alteration would you make?
27. If you owned a bar, what would it be known for?
28. If you could open up any hospitality business, what would it be?
29. If you had to give a new parent one piece of advice, what would you tell them?
30. If you had to lose one of your five senses, which one would you pick?
31. If you could live as anyone else in the world for one day, who would you choose?
32. If you could make a career change now, what would you do?
33. If you could visit any person from your past that you’ve lost touch with, who would it be?
34. If you could talk to someone in your life that is dead, who would it be and what would you ask them about?
35. If you could change one thing about your partner, what would it be?
36. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
37. If you had to pick the thing you think contributes the most to human beauty, what would you say it is?
38. If you had to kill off one of your exes, which one would you pick and why?
39. If you had to name the single most erotic part of the human body, what would you say it is?
40. If you were invisible for a day, what would you do?
41. If you had to pick three books that have impacted your life, which ones would you choose?
42. If you had to choose between fame and fortune, which would you pick and why?
43. If a movie was made about your life, who would play you?
44. If you could pick a music artist to write a song about your life, who would you choose?
45. If you had to pick a song that reminds you of your mother, what song would you say?
46. If you had to pick a song that reminds you of your father, what song would you say?
47. If a genie granted you three wishes, what would you wish for?
48. If you had to give a prize for the most attractive politician, who would win it?
49. If you could have overheard a specific conversation between people, which would it be?
50. If you had to nominate one person you know for sainthood, who would you choose and why?
51. If you had to rename each of your children, what would you call them?
52. If you had to pick a new name for yourself, what would you choose?
53. If you had to come up with a new national holiday, what would it be?
54. If you could develop one skill at a rapid pace, what skill would you choose?
55. If you had to choose the happiest moment of your life, what would it be?
56. If you could choose one superpower to have, which one would you pick?
57. If you woke up suddenly because your house was on fire, what things would you save?
58. If you could have any car you wanted, which car would you choose?
59. If you could be an Olympic athlete, which sport would you want to compete in?
60. If a fortune teller could accurately tell you the day you were going to die, would you want to know? Why or why not?

