Questions to ask your parents *before they die*

You will not need all of these. Choose five, ask them slowly, and follow each answer with "What happened next?" or "How did that feel?". The best stories usually arrive on the second or third question, not the first.

> **Before you start:** sit somewhere quiet, turn off the television, and prop a phone on a table at eye level so you can film their face as well as their words. Tell them they can skip any question. Stop while it is still going well.

Childhood

1. What is your earliest memory?
2. Describe the house you grew up in. What did it smell like?
3. What did you get in trouble for as a child?
4. Who was your closest friend, and what did you do together?
5. What did you want to be when you grew up?

Your own parents

6. What were your parents like when you were young?
7. What did you learn from your mother? From your father?
8. What do you know about your grandparents and where they came from?
9. What is a family story that should never be lost?

Growing up

10. When did you first feel like an adult?
11. What was your first job, and what did you spend your first pay on?
12. Where did you go and what did you do at nineteen?
13. Which decision changed the course of your life?

Love

14. Who was your first love, and what happened?
15. How did you meet Mum (or Dad)? Describe the day.
16. What has love taught you that you did not expect?

Becoming a parent

17. What was the day I was born like?
18. Why was I given my name?
19. What was I like as a small child?
20. What surprised you most about being a parent?
21. Is there anything you would do differently?

Hard times

22. What is the hardest thing you have been through, and what got you through it?
23. What was the hardest goodbye of your life?
24. Who did you have to forgive, and were you able to?
25. What is the kindest thing a stranger has done for you?

Looking back

26. What are you most proud of?
27. What is the most important thing you have changed your mind about?
28. What do you wish you had done more of?
29. What would you tell your younger self?
30. What do you hope your grandchildren will know about you?
31. How do you want to be remembered?

Things we should know

32. If you were seriously ill and could not speak for yourself, what would matter most to you?
33. Who should make decisions for you if you could not?
34. Where are your important papers, and is there a will?
35. Is there anything you want done, said or kept after you have gone?

"Is there anything I haven't asked that you would like to talk about?"

End every conversation with this one. Many people carry a story they have been waiting for someone to ask about.

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