



Before You Ask

*A Gentle Guide to Starting the
Conversation Without Fear,
Pressure, or Regret*

A Note Before You Begin

Many people never ask Grandma for her stories, not because they don't want to, but because they're afraid of doing it wrong. Afraid of opening something emotional. Afraid of making it awkward. Afraid of realizing they waited too long.

This guide is to help you **take the first step with care and confidence**.

You don't need to be ready for everything.

You just need to be ready to begin.

First, Take the Pressure Off

This does **not** have to be:

- A formal interview
- A perfectly planned moment
- A complete life story
- Something you “get through.”

It can simply be:

- A conversation
- A shared memory
- A few questions asked with love

Even one imperfect conversation can become something precious.

There is no finish line here.

There is only presence.

What If You're Feeling Nervous?

That's normal.

You might be nervous because:

- You don't want to upset her
- You're worried she won't want to talk
- You are afraid emotions will surface
- You're carrying the weight of “what if this is our only chance.”

None of that means you're unprepared, just that you understand the importance of the moment.

You are allowed to feel nervous *and* still begin.

How to Bring It Up (Without Pressure)

You don't need a script.

You don't need to explain everything at once.

Simple is best.

Here are a few gentle ways to ask her if she is willing to tell you her story:

- “I’ve been realizing how much I love hearing your stories. Would you be open to having some conversations with me that we can capture on audio?”
- “There are so many things about your life I don’t want to forget. Would you be open to having some conversations with me that we can capture on audio?”
- “Would you be open to telling me more about your life sometime, and could be capture it on audio?”

You’re not asking for everything.

You’re asking for *permission*.

If today isn’t the right day, that’s okay.

You’ve planted the seed.

If She Hesitates or Says “I Don’t Know”

This happens often—and it’s not rejection.

She may be:

- Unsure where to start
- Modest about her experiences
- Afraid her memories don’t matter
- Tired, distracted, or unsure how she feels

You can respond with reassurance, not persuasion:

- “We don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to.”
- “There’s no rush.”
- “Even little stories mean a lot to me.”

Sometimes people need time to warm up to the idea.

Sometimes the first conversation is just about *whether* there will be another.

That still counts.

When Emotions Come Up

They might.

For her. For you. For both of you.

Tears don’t mean you’ve done something wrong.

If emotions surface:

Pause

- Breathe
- Let the moment be what it is

You don't need to fix anything.

You don't need to redirect.

Often, the most meaningful memories are wrapped in emotion.

Silence is allowed.

So is laughter.

So is stopping early.

You Don't Need to Ask Everything

You may be holding a book full of questions.

You do **not** need to:

- Ask them in order
- Ask them all
- Ask more than feels right

One question asked with attention is better than ten asked with urgency.

If the conversation flows, follow it.

If it drifts, let it.

This is not a performance.

It's a connection.

What "Success" Really Looks Like

Success is **not**:

- Completing a list
- Getting through every topic
- Capturing everything perfectly

Success *is*:

- Showing up
- Listening
- Making her feel seen
- Creating a moment that didn't exist before

If she felt heard—even briefly—you did this right.

If Time or Energy Is Limited

Sometimes circumstances aren't ideal.

If time is short, remember:

- One story is enough
- One memory matters
- One conversation can be a gift

You are not failing if you can't do everything.

You are honoring her by doing *something*.

Let go of the idea that it must be complete.

Meaning doesn't require completeness.

A Final Word

The hardest part is beginning.

You've already done something important by caring enough to try.

Trust yourself.

Trust the relationship.

Trust that love fills in the gaps.

When you're ready, open the book.

Choose a question.

And simply listen.

That is more than enough.