

Head Start Alumni Storybanking

At the heart of a great story are the people connecting, talking, and sharing. The team at NHSA developed these five tips to help you have a meaningful conversation with your interview program alumni.

Tip 1: Prep Your Questions

Before you record anything, use the NHSA question lists to plan your questions (or write your own!) and share them ahead of time with the alumni you plan to interview. This simple preparation will help you get the most out of your time together.

Ask for “Then and Now” Photos

Ask your alumni to share a current picture and one from their childhood archives. Use these photos to illustrate the interview—no one can resist a pictures of #HeadStartCuties!

Get Permission to Share

Your first responsibility is to those who have entrusted you with their stories: to ensure they are comfortable and their privacy is respected. Secure their permission each time you interview by having them sign a release. Need an example? [Review NHSA's storybank release form.](#)

Five Starter Questions

1. Do you have a favorite Head Start memory?
2. Tell me about the time of your life when you attended Head Start (what was happening in your family, where did you live)?
3. What was most meaningful to you about your experience?
4. How has Head Start played a role in what you do today?
5. If the future of Head Start rested on your shoulders, what's the one thing you want others to know?

Tip 2: Think of Your Readers

Keep in mind future readers may not be familiar with the specific people and places you mention. Set up context where needed with questions like “Tell me about Head Start from your perspective” and “What teachers were the biggest influence on you?”

Use your selected questions as a guide, not a script. If your alumni goes off topic, go with it! You can redirect them to your original question later. Think of it as a conversation; there's no right or wrong thing to talk about, as long as it's meaningful to them.

How will you plan to conduct the interview?

- Decide which video platform to use and make sure you have a solid internet connection!
- Check your microphones, camera, and lighting. Use high-quality when possible, especially if you plan to share your video! More below...

Tip 3: Creating Video

Video captures a viewer's attention for longer and is a powerful way to spotlight your story. Record your conversation or send questions in advance and ask folks to record themselves.

When guiding alumni to record themselves, ask them to rephrase the question at the beginning of their response instead of jumping right into the answer (eg, "Do you have a favorite Head Start memory?" vs. "My favorite Head Start Memory is...")

What helps to make a good video?

- A quiet location; no background noise
- A well-lit environment with natural sunlight or plenty of indoor lighting
- An eye-level camera or phone so it's easy to look directly at your viewer
- Multiple takes! While an authentic feel is important, practice makes perfect.

Tip 4: Distribute Creatively!

How will you share your program's impact with the world? Where will you publish? Your website? Your local newspaper? Somewhere else? Think of a potential screenshot that helps to capture a moment of everyone smiling and share later on social media (don't forget to use the hashtag **#HeadStartAlum** so NHSA can amplify your post!).

Building relationships with elected officials lays the groundwork for putting Head Start in a favorable position during budget season. Use our [social media toolkit](#) to share your interview with elected officials at every level.



Tip 5: Follow-Up

Thank your alumni and ask them to sign up as a Head Start advocate: nhsa.org/take-action

Visit nhsa.org/alumni to get inspired by alumni stories.

Reach out to Malkia Payton-Jackson, director of alumni engagement, at mpaytonjackson@nhsa.org with any questions or to share your program's alumni engagement efforts.