FREE PRINTABLE

72 questions to ask your parents & grandparents

One day you'll wish you had asked. These are the same questions inside the Persimmon app, organized by the chapters of a life. Pick one, ask it at dinner, and press record.

Before you start

- **One question at a time.** Follow the story wherever it goes, not the list.
- **Record it.** Their voice is the part you'll treasure. Your phone's voice memo app is plenty.
- **Let silence sit.** The best answer usually comes after the pause.
- **Ask “what happened next?”** It's the most useful follow-up there is.

🌱 Little

Start here. Early memories are vivid and safe ground, and they warm everyone up.

1. What did your childhood home look, sound, and smell like?
2. What food did you love most as a child — and who made it?
3. What's your earliest memory?
4. What were you like as a little one — shy, wild, dreamy?
5. Who filled your early years, and what did you do together?
6. What frightened you as a child, and who made you feel safe?
7. What did an ordinary day look like when you were small?
8. What's a smell or a sound that instantly takes you back?
9. What did you believe about the world then that makes you smile now?
10. Who first made you feel truly loved?
11. What did you long for as a child that you didn't have?
12. What's a moment from childhood you've never forgotten — and why?

🌤️ Growing up

Dreams, friends, first heartbreaks. Expect laughter.

1. What did you dream of becoming when you grew up?
2. Who was your best friend, and what did you get up to?
3. What song or music takes you back to those years?
4. A moment from school or your teens you'll never forget?
5. Who did you look up to, and why?
6. When did you first feel like your own person?
7. What's something you got in trouble for that you'd do again?
8. Who believed in you when you were young?
9. What did you worry about most back then?
10. What's a chance you took — or one you wish you had?
11. When did you first have your heart broken?
12. What did you have to figure out on your own?

💛 Love & family

How they met, becoming a parent, and what family means to them.

1. How did you meet your husband, wife, or partner?
2. What made you know it was love?
3. Tell me about the day you became a parent.
4. What tradition do you most hope the family keeps alive?
5. What does family mean to you?
6. A small everyday moment with loved ones you treasure?
7. What's the hardest part of loving someone — and the best?
8. Who taught you how to love, for better or worse?
9. What do you wish you'd said to someone while you had the chance?
10. How has love changed for you over a lifetime?
11. When did you feel most at home with someone?
12. What have you forgiven, and what forgave you?

🧭 Journeys

The hard chapters. Ask gently, and only when the moment feels right.

1. What's the hardest thing you ever lived through — and how did you get through it?
2. Tell the story of a journey or move that changed your life.
3. What did you have to leave behind, and what did you carry with you?
4. Who helped you when things were hardest?
5. What were you most afraid of, and how did you face it?
6. When did you feel most alone, and what pulled you through?
7. What's a loss that shaped who you are?
8. What kept you going when you wanted to give up?
9. What did hardship teach you about yourself?
10. Was there a moment everything could have gone differently?
11. What did you sacrifice, and was it worth it?
12. What are you most proud of surviving?

🕯️ Lessons

What a lifetime taught them. These are the answers you'll replay most.

1. What advice would you give your younger self?
2. What's a lesson you'd want a child to carry through life?
3. What do you believe about how to treat people?
4. What took you years to learn, that matters most?
5. What do you most want your grandchildren to know?
6. What's a belief you had to unlearn?
7. What do you know for certain now?
8. What's worth fighting for, and what's better to let go of?
9. What does a good life mean to you?
10. What would you want said about you when you're gone?
11. What's the kindest thing anyone ever did for you?
12. What have you changed your mind about?

Later years

Looking back from here. Save these for a quiet, unhurried afternoon.

1. Looking back, what are you proudest of?
2. What brings you the most joy these days?
3. What do you understand now that you didn't when you were young?
4. What do you hope people remember about you?
5. If you could relive one day, which would it be?
6. What are you still curious about?
7. What's a regret you've made peace with?
8. Who do you miss?
9. What's the best part of growing older?
10. If you could sit with your younger self, what would you say?
11. What are you grateful for that you once took for granted?
12. What do you hope your family carries on after you?

Common questions

What questions should I ask my grandparents?

Start with easy, sensory childhood questions (their home, a favorite food, their earliest memory), then move through growing up, love and family, hard times, life lessons, and looking back. Ask one or two at a time and follow whatever they light up about.

How do I record my parents telling their life story?

Use your phone's voice recorder or an app like Persimmon, sit somewhere quiet, ask one open question, and let silences run. A 10-minute recording of one good story beats a stiff two-hour interview.

What if they don't want to talk about the hard parts?

Don't push. Ask about the people who helped them, or what they carried with them, rather than the hardship itself. Many people open up on the second or third conversation.