Tips for Interviewing Persons Living with Dementia

1. Remember the individual behind the condition. Listen to their story and avoid correcting, interrupting or speaking on behalf of the person.
2. Treat the person with dementia like any other interviewee. Act naturally, greet them with a handshake, and avoid patronizing the interviewee.
3. If necessary, allow more time for answers and repeat questions if required.
4. Ask one concisely phrased question at a time. If needed, break longer questions down into pieces.
5. Often the person with dementia will reply to questions with short, concise answers rather than longer comprehensive ones, so be prepared to move on to the next point or topic.
6. If you do not understand the answer you receive, ask for clarification, or repeat what you have understood for confirmation.
7. Remember, it might be difficult for a person with dementia to recall past events. Do not press them if they are unable to answer a question that requires recollecting the past, specific persons’ names or to give a timeline of events.
8. Speak clearly, but remember it is not necessary to raise your voice when speaking.

(Source: adapted from The Alzheimer Society of Ireland: <http://www.alzheimer.ie/eng/Media-Centre/Interviewing-Meeting-People-with-Dementia>)