

There are a number of sections on the Descriptive Information Form. Below are descriptions of the key sections of this form:

1. **Item ID Number:** The collecting organization may hold multiple events, and each of these events may include multiple contributors. By assigning a unique number to each Event, the Project Team can ensure that the items, photographs, and stories collected are associated with the correct event. And further, by assigning a unique number to each Contributor at an event, you help ensure that the items, photographs, and stories collected are associated with the correct individual Contributor. The Item ID Number consists of three parts: a *pre-assigned event number*, followed by the *Contributor's event registration or nametag number*, followed by the *number of that particular item that the Descriptive Information Form describes* (1, 2, 3, etc.).
2. **Contributor Name:** This section helps the Project Team to sort and connect each Descriptive Information Form to the correct individual Contributor. Contributors should enter their full name here.
3. **Title:** Contributors should provide a title that they feel adequately represents the item. *There's more information about how to create meaningful titles below.*
4. **Creator/Created:** If known, the Contributor should provide the name of the individual or organization responsible for creating this resource, item or photograph.
5. **Location:** This section typically includes neighborhood, city or town, state, and country. It's ok if you or a Contributor doesn't know all of these details, but please encourage Contributors to write down what they *DO* know about the location. Specific location information beyond neighborhood or town (e.g. "Walden Pond," "my backyard at 5 Woodside Road," or "Springfield City Hall") should be included in the Description section of the form.
6. **When (Date):** The date can include year, month, and day, or an approximate date such as "circa 1970" or a decade range. It's helpful to have an estimated or approximate date information, rather than no date information at all.
7. **People:** List full names (first and last) of each person in the photograph/item, listed left-to-right and back-to-front. If you don't know the full name, then partial names are acceptable.
8. **Describe/Description:** Contributors should provide additional details about the photograph that they feel are important to include. *There's more information about how to describe items below.*
9. **FOR PROJECT TEAM USE ONLY:** This section is to be completed by members of the Project Team and is broken into two parts. The *Information Station* area of the FOR PROJECT TEAM USE ONLY section should be completed by Information Station Volunteers while the Copying Station area should be completed by Copying Station Volunteers.

CREATING MEANINGFUL TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS

The item title and item description are ultimately the Contributor's decision, but here are guidelines used by the Mass. Memories Road Show program at UMass Boston about what comprises a good title and description:

- Uses first person ("I," "me," "my," "we," "our," etc.)
- Explains the connection between the Contributor and the people and places in the item ("my house," "my uncle," "our business," "my neighborhood park," etc.)
- Is concise (short and to the point)

Describing the item and why it is important to the Contributor

A crucial part of the Descriptive Information Form is the Description section, in which the Contributor describes the item and its importance to them. This information offers additional context for each item and provides researchers with deeper information when working with the collection. Your role at the Information Station is to support the Contributor in describing their item(s), to help them tell their own story and to describe their items in their own voice. Here are a few strategies for accomplishing this:

- **Start with a conversation** about the item. Some Contributors prefer to talk through their description before writing it on the form.
- **Be an active listener.** Give the Contributor time to think about what to say or write.
- **Ask** the Contributor a few questions, but not too many. Guide them toward explaining their connection to the item.
- **Encourage** the Contributor to reflect on why the item is important to them.
- **Invite** the Contributor to share a story about the item.
- **Pay attention to preferences and comfort.** While we recommend having Contributors fill out the Descriptive Information Form themselves, some might prefer to dictate to a family member or a friend. Feel free to offer to transcribe, if this seems helpful.

Additionally, we recommend that Contributors be *required* to provide a title and description for each item they plan to contribute. Without these key pieces of information, little will be known or understood about the items being contributed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION FORM

Should I use full names for the people in my photographs or items?

Yes, full names are preferred. If you don't know the full name, then partial names are acceptable.

Is it OK if I can't identify everyone in my photographs?

Yes. We encourage Contributors to identify as many people as possible for the sake of completeness. That said, we understand that you might not have all of this information. For each person that you can't name, list them as "unidentified."

What do I write if there are no people in the item or if I can't identify any of the people in the photograph or item?

If there are no people pictured in the item, check the "N/A" box (for "Not Applicable"). If you can't identify any of the people in the photograph or item, check the "I don't know" box.

What if I don't know the precise date of the item?

Please share your best guess (e.g., "around 1980" or "sometime in the 1970s or '80s"). If you really have no idea when the photograph was taken or when the item was created, please share any dates you do know in relation to the people or places in the item (e.g. "my grandfather was born in 1909 and died in 1982").

Do I need to have the permission of people pictured in the item?

While you do not need formal signed permission of the people in the photograph or item, we assume that Contributors are not aware of any objections of adults pictured. If an adult pictured in an item requests to have the contribution taken down from the collection, we will do so. Also, for people under 18-years-old represented in an item or photograph, we require signed permission from a parent or legal guardian. Without a signed Event Registration and Permission Form, we will wait until the youngest minor in the photograph turns 18 before adding it to the online collection.

Do you keep my photograph or item?

No. We will digitize your photographs or items in your presence at the Copying Station and immediately return them to you. This collection is comprised entirely of digital copies of physical items, as well as born digital items.