

Conducting Interviews



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Conducting Interviews

Interviews

Types of Interviews

Preparation

Questions & Schedules

Interviews

- Qualitative research method
- Typically **one-on-one** conversations with users, not-yet users, community representatives, or stakeholders
 - face-to-face
 - phone
 - video conference
- **Time intensive** (45–60 minutes for sessions, plus preparation, processing, analysis)
- Subject to **interviewer bias** (e.g., interviewee wanting to please or not offend interviewer, interviewer “leading” the interviewee)
- Subject to **interviewee inaccuracies** in retelling experiences/behavior (e.g., remembering processes or engagement differently than they occurred)
- Typically involve small numbers of subjects
- Opportunity for **follow up questions and clarification** than many methods, leads to deeper possibilities for understanding
- Opportunity to gather **anecdotal data** and human **stories**; powerful for storytelling.
- One-on-one format allows interviewers to avoid group dynamics issues that may arise with focus groups and customize interviews to individuals as needed

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- Structured
- Semi-structured
- Unstructured
- Standardized
- Narrative
- Panel



Structured Interviews

- Follows a **pre-set interview script** (typically including pre-set follow up questions), read aloud by interviewer, who records responses
- Attempt to **keep conditions the same between interviews** and among multiple interviewers
- **Set questions**
- **Scripted prompts**
- Interviewer typically attempts objective approach to avoid influencing responses

Semi-Structured Interviews



- Interviewer has broader prompts, may rephrase questions or explain what a question means
- Questions may be omitted or added in for clarification
- Clear structure is followed, but allows for flexibility
- Interviewer must note what questions were asked in each interview and any deviations to the script

Unstructured Interviews

- More like a conversation
- Questions may not be planned in advance, but depend on what interviewee says
- Usually requires increased skill (to react and respond in the moment)
- Notetakers must work harder and faster
- Piloting with feedback from a third party is recommended



Other Types of Interviews

Standardized Interviews

- Questions do not ask for an open response, but offer a list of options
- Verbal equivalent of a checklist

Narrative Interviews

- Interviewee story-tells experience
- Interviewer's role as prompter, keep narrative relevant
- Analysis can be challenging

Panel Interviews

- Interview the same people over lengths of time to find out how views may change
- Need to establish willingness from beginning
- Options for opting out at any point; mechanism for replacing opt-outs

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Interviewers

- Interviewers should be properly trained in interview techniques
 - Pleasant, receptive manner
 - Inspire confidence
 - Good listener
 - Helps participants feel comfortable
- Asks non-leading questions, refrain from body language that may influence responses
- Follows up with additional questions as the format allows
- Avoids and counteracts any interviewer bias
- Ideally, does not “represent” the entity being explored in the interview
- May be accompanied by a recorder or notetaker



Recording



- Modes: audio, video, notes
- Requires consent (signed)
- Note taking can be augmented by pre-filled in materials, checklist, forms, with ample space to note departures.
- Purposes:
 - allowing interviewer to focus on interviewee
 - capturing verbal or non-verbal cues
 - transcribing discussion verbatim
 - validating notes
 - enabling multiple listeners to check reliability
 - decreasing likelihood of interviewer bias

General Preparation

- Prepare recruiting and consent forms in accordance with IRB requirements and informing participants about any risks they may encounter.
- Ensure comfortable, accessible, safe spaces (check for barriers in digital and/or physical environments, e.g., time of day, technology required, cost of transportation/parking/wayfinding, security considerations)
- Instruct interviewees about any materials they should bring (e.g., screenshots of examples, writing utensils) or use (e.g., whiteboards) during the session.
- Ask interviewees in advance and provide accommodations that enable or facilitate their participation.
- Ensure prepared scripts, questions, consent forms, props, note taking materials/checklists, recording devices, etc. are ready in advance.
- Pilot questions and protocols extensively before the first “real” interview; select pilot participants who are similar to the intended interview. Check to be sure questions are clearly stated, jargon free, not leading, etc.
- If possible, use both an interviewer and a notetaker/observer. Notetakers/observers should not attempt to participate actively in the session but should be introduced to interviewees.
- Consider role and cost of transcription services or coding software.

Cultural Competence in Interviews

Reflect on your process, start to finish.

- Have you met with your target audience to ensure your work is connected to issues relevant to them?
- Have you included diverse members in your research team including those that might identify with your interviewees?
- Have you considered the representativeness of your interviewee sample?
- Have you reflected on your planned interview communication style?
- Are you mindful of the role of identity and power differences in your interview plan?
- Have you engaged in full disclosure and transparency with your interviewees (including but not limited to IRB consent)?
- Have you fully considered risks to interviewees (including but not limited to privacy concerns)?
- Have you incorporated plans for reciprocity for the time and effort given by interviewees? For empowerment? How will involvement in the project benefit interviewees and those they represent?
- Have you engaged in sufficient cultural competence training and reflection to conduct the interviews in a culturally competent manner and be aware of and avoid inclusion of researcher bias?

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Interview Questions

- Start with “easy” questions to build participant confidence and comfort level
- Questions should be concise and focused
- Avoid jargon
- Ask one question at a time
- Avoid hypothetical questions
- Questions should flow logically



General Schedule

- Begin with confirmation of consent to participate and record.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Share clear instructions and timeline for the interview.
- Engage in interview questions.
- Close with a review of the conversation, options for interviewee follow ups, and an expression of gratitude.
- Afterwards, check the recording, write summaries, and begin analysis.

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