

How to Design and Facilitate an Interview

Designing and facilitating an effective interview is a skill that grows with practice. You will need to make a number of important decisions about questions, content, wording and format when planning an interview. There is not one perfect way to complete an interview but the following tips and reminders will help guide your thinking and develop your skills.



When writing questions, consider:

- The question content, the scope and the purpose (why you are asking this question).
- The format for the response (is it a scale, ranking, extended response, multiple choice, etc.?).
- The wording of the question so that you can obtain the information you want (open and closed questions).
- Placement or order of the questions.

Types of questions:

- Open-ended questions encourage interviewees to respond to a question broadly, in some detail and in their own terms. These can be time-consuming to develop and analyse, but allow for the greatest variety of responses.
- Closed questions give interviewees a limited number of possible responses which might be provided to them or require just a yes or no answer. Avoid these in interviews unless they are followed with a request for an explanation.

Also consider:

- Location and surroundings. (Is it comfortable? How much noise is there? How will you get there?)
- Will you provide the interviewee with the questions in advance so they have time to consider some responses?
- Are you interviewing a few people at a time or conducting individual interviews?
- How will you record responses? If you want to record using audio, you MUST get permission from the interviewee.

Other tips:

- Start an interview with a brief introduction about the purposes and goals.
- General questions should be placed earlier in the interview, while more sensitive questions should be near the end.
- Avoid overly technical terms or jargon and vague imprecise terms.
- Encourage a conversational atmosphere but avoid finishing your interviewees' sentences.
- Consider WHO you are interviewing and ensure you thank them for their time and assistance with your research.
- Consider different ways to probe your interviewee if needed: silence, overt encouragement, asking for elaboration or clarification or repetition.