

DIRection

Research Game Plan

▶ Conducting Interviews

Why? (purpose)

- Interviews are the best way to learn about the perspectives or expertise of a small number of people.
 - Interviewing multiple people at once is called a focus group.
 - Interviews cannot be used to form general opinions about a topic.
 - Focus groups are forums for examining multiple perspectives and opinions, but generalization should still be avoided.
- ATTENTION - Interviews and focus groups are not anonymous and could generate feelings of discomfort if the topic is sensitive.

When? (context)

- Very detailed information about a topic is necessary.
- If there are only a few individuals with the necessary information or expertise.
- Organize a focus group if discussing and debating multiple perspectives is an important element of your data collection.

Survey
general
anonymous
confidential

Interview
specific
personal
confidential

How? (form)

1 Conduct

- Prepare, prepare **PREPARE!** Note the most important questions to ask and make sure you formulate open-ended questions. Mark the most difficult questions and **develop probes** that will keep the conversation flowing.
- Think about the setting. The interview should happen in a **comfortable and quiet** place where there is adequate furniture and little risk of interruption. Consider conducting the interview in the interviewee's environment. Important observations can be made there and these can contribute to your research.
- Listen, listen, **LISTEN!** An interview is, above all, a listening exercise. Be ready to **reformulate** the interviewee's words in order to get more information and to keep the conversation flowing. Reformulating will also help avoid interpretation. **Don't interrupt.** Ensure that the interviewee has ample time to express her perspective.

2 Record

- Ask if you can voice or video record an interview.
- Share your confidentiality policy with the interviewee.
- **Be flexible!** If the interviewee is uncomfortable being recorded, just take notes.
- Establish a system of abbreviations for note taking.
- Establish a way to mark direct quotes or paraphrasing.

3 Analyze

- **Transcribe** your interviews, even if it's time-consuming!
- Transcribing helps with coding. **Coding** is another word for categories. Use categories, or coding, to organize text from interviews. Once text is organized into categories, patterns and correlations will emerge.
- Remain objective and **avoid biases** when coding. Expectancy bias: info from an interview matches my hypotheses.

