**Page ID**: **#.# Ethnographic Study**

# Primary Content

**Title**

Enter the **Title** of the **Method** here (REQUIRED).

**Ethnographic Study**

**Description -- i.e., What it is:**

Enter the **Description** here (REQUIRED).

A holistic qualitative study of users in the context of their actual environment over an extended time period. Data is gathered through observation, interviews, and artifacts, such as documents and photographs.

Ethnographic research provides qualitative insights about users’ situations, goals, constraints, and behaviors. These qualitative factors give a more comprehensive, nuanced view of users’ perspectives than other research methods.

Typically, ethnography involves embedding the researcher in a target culture, society, or group for several months up to a full year. However, a modified method known as rapid ethnography allows for a faster study process.

Rapid ethnography uses regular, frequent meetings to report findings and iteratively fine-tune the focus of the research process. The technique can be used to quickly investigate or explore a specific question or theme in a limited amount of time. This approach is beneficial in health informatics, as rapid data gathering supports critical decision-making necessary on a shorter timeframe.

**Recommended Uses**

Enter the **Recommended Use** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* To define the problem addressed in a project and support decisions on scope.
* To understand the users’ needs and support of the creation of personas.
* To understand the workflow of the operational environment and support the completion of task analyses.

**Limitations**

Enter the **Limitations** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* The data can be highly interpretive and depends on completeness and objectivity of the observations made by the researcher.
* Cost to plan and conduct observations may limit use.
* Rapid ethnography may not be as comprehensive as longer-term ethnographic studies.

**Outcomes**

Enter the **Outcomes** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* A comprehensive report, along with relevant artifacts, such as observer logs, diaries, photographs, audio or video recordings, and interview transcripts.
* Depending on the methods used, the report may also include quantitative data, such as time-and-motion information.
* A summary of qualitative insights about users’ situations, goals, constraints, and behaviors that supports a more comprehensive, contextual understanding of the users’ perspectives.

**Required Skills and Expertise**

Enter the **Required Skills** **and Expertise** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Specialized training is highly recommended. The method is best leveraged with some familiarity with contextual inquiry methods, to avoid observer bias.

**How to Proceed**

If there are no details, insert TBD.

* **How-To Guide.** Review step-by-step instructions on how to conduct an ethnographic study ~~and access tools and instruments to support your evaluation~~.
* **Schedule a Consult.** Connect with a usability specialist for support on your project.

[BEGIN: How to Do It]

**Introduction**

Enter the **Introduction** here (REQUIRED).

Ethnography is the most resource intensive but also effective method for gathering information about the context in which users perform tasks or interact with tools and systems. It usually focuses on long term studies where researchers observe participants as they perform tasks in the normal context over days, weeks, or months. This method can involve observation, interviews, audio or video recording, artifacts, diaries, and photographs. It can provide valuable information for understanding user personas or developing user requirements and storyboards.

**Procedure**

Enter the **Steps** here. (Required).

An ethnographic study is conducted by the researcher situating themselves within the context that the target user typically performs their tasks. The researcher then observes and take notes about every aspect of the users experience with that task. This can involve what tools they use, how many teammates they might interact with, what emotions they might experience during task performance, etc. The data collection methods will vary depending the information the researcher is trying to collect. However, the researcher should be prepared to conduct interviews, collect artifacts of the task, keep diaries of observations during the course of the study, and collect audio and video recordings as needed. There is no set procedure for this method, but the researcher should be aware of what information they are trying to collect during the course of the study and make sure they are thoroughly collecting data in order to provide as much detail as possible for the report. This data will also inform future efforts such as personas, task analysis and developing user requirements.

**Tools**

If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* N/A

[END: How to Do It]

**Author**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Human Factors Engineering (HFE), Office of Health Informatics, Veterans Health Administration

**Sources**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* Cathy Herzon, C., Skrobe, R., Wilson, C., & Battle, L. (June 2009). Ethnography. In Usability Body of Knowledge. Retrieved April 29, 2020, from [http://usabilitybok.org/ethnography](about:blank).

**References**

Enter the **REFERENCES** here. If there are no details, insert N/A or TBD.

* N/A