

Introduction to Course 2

Empathize with users

- Video:** Empathize with users
2 min
- Reading:** Understand empathy in UX design
10 min
- Video:** Recruiting research participants
8 min
- Reading:** Determine research goals and questions
30 min
- Practice Quiz:** Activity: Define your research goals and questions
1 question
- Reading:** Activity Exemplar: Define your research goals and questions
15 min
- Reading:** Optional: Find and recruit interview participants
15 min
- Video:** Optional: Prepare for user interviews
2 min
- Video:** Optional: Interviewing users
6 min
- Reading:** Optional: Conduct user interviews
15 min
- Practice Quiz:** Activity: Build empathy with users to inform your research
1 question
- Reading:** Activity Exemplar: Build empathy with users to inform your research
15 min

Optional: Learn about empathy maps

Identify user pain points

Create personas

Week 1 review

Optional: Find and recruit interview participants

Empathizing with users is critical when it comes to creating a great user experience. In order to empathize with users and understand their pain points, UX designers conduct interviews with real people who might use the product they’re designing.

For this part of this course, interviewing participants is **optional**. We'll provide fictional user bios that you can use in your research in place of real-life interview participants. This reading, along with the other optional reading and videos in this lesson, is for those who would like to get early experience conducting real-life interviews, or who simply want to learn more about the UX research interview process.

Create a screening survey to find the right participants

The participants you select for a research study should be based on your research goals and the target users of the product you’re designing. The best way to check if potential participants meet the study’s desired characteristics and represent a diverse set of backgrounds is by sending a screener survey. A screener survey is a detailed list of questions that help researchers determine if potential participants meet the requirements of the research study.

Screening participants often requires collecting demographics, which are the characteristics of a group or individual. Demographics that you might ask about in a screener survey include:

- Age
- Geographic location
- Job title or industry
- Gender

It's important to recognize that asking demographic questions can be a sensitive and challenging space to navigate. Be mindful of the questions you ask in screener surveys and how you ask them. Frame questions in a way that is respectful and inclusive, and make questions optional if they ask about demographic data. You might want to preface demographic questions with a short explanation of why the question is being asked. For example, “In the spirit of inclusive design, we are asking these questions to make sure we’re reaching out to a diverse group of people.”

Interviewing participants with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities is extremely important to ensure that your designs are accessible and equitable. As you start thinking about who you are designing for, aim to form a representative sample. A representative sample is a subset of the target population that seeks to accurately reflect the characteristics of the larger group.

The participants in a representative sample should include user groups that have been commonly underrepresented in previous research. This lack of representation is often the result of biases due to age, race, gender, or ability. Ultimately, the research you conduct should help you create great experiences for all users.

Creating representative samples often takes additional time, money, and resources that you may not have access to at the moment. You won’t be asked to create representative samples for this program, but keep in mind that it’s an important part of the UX design work you will be doing in the real world.

Start recruiting participants

Once you’ve determined the research goals and written interview questions (covered in [How to determine your research goals and questions](#) [↗]), and created a screener survey to find a representative sample of study participants, you’re ready to start recruiting participants!

How and where you find research study participants depends on the company you work for, the type of product you’re designing, time constraints for the research, the project’s budget, and the accessibility of target users. Based on these project details, you can choose from a variety of ways to find research participants.

- **Personal network.** As a UX designer in training, your personal network is a great way to find people to interview! Think about family, friends, or colleagues who fit the demographics of the target users you’re designing for.
- **Existing user base.** If you’re conducting research and creating designs for an organization with an existing user base, you’ll likely be able to recruit participants from that group of established connections. This might not be the case for your current project in this program, but recruiting from an existing user base is pretty common in the real world.
- **Online.** Alternatively, if you’re coming up with designs for an imaginary company or a newly established business, the easiest way to recruit participants for your study is online. You can use your own social media to find research participants. Or, there are websites created specifically to connect with research participants, like [UserTesting](#) [↗] and [User Interviews](#) [↗]. You can also find online groups that have users with the demographic characteristics that you want to interview. For example, if you’re designing an app for parents, you might find an online group about parenting. Before you post in an online community, make sure to check group rules or ask an administrator for permission to ask for research participation!
- **Hallway testing.** If recruiting participants online doesn’t seem like an option, a less formal way to recruit for your study is to ask people in person. You can use a recruiting method known as hallway testing, which means asking people that pass by in the “hallway” to try the product you’re designing. Try to position yourself in a location where you’re most likely to encounter your product’s target audience, like a dog park or a coffee shop. Hallway testing can be effective if you’re recruiting a small number of participants, if you have limited time, or if you want to conduct research for free. However, finding participants in this way is risky because the people you collect feedback from might not have all the characteristics of your product’s potential users.
- **Third-party recruiting agencies.** Some organizations have a budget to hire third-party research recruiting agencies. Recruiting agencies are useful because they save you time and can often reach diverse users.

Mark as completed

