

Interviewing Users



By Anahita Sanandaji



Oregon State
University

What Is An Interview?



Interviews are a commonly used method for identifying user needs and establishing requirements.



A researcher asks questions of, and records responses from, users.



Purpose: To discover what is in user's mind
NOT to put ideas in the user's mind



However, interviewing isn't always as easy as it sounds

You need to Practice

People of the Interview

- **Interviewer:**

- A person in charge of running the interview
- Should follow the script associated with their type of interview
- Should focus on listening to the participant and asking questions,
 - Better not to take notes.

- **Recorder (note taker):**

- A person in charge of observing the interview and taking notes.
- Typically do not talk during the interview.
- Instead focus on recording the information they are observing.
- Video or audio recording an interview is acceptable specially when there is no note taker

- **Interviewee:**

- A person who answers the questions
- At least 2 participants are required, but more users increase the validity of the findings.



Types of Interview

- **Structured:**

- Questions and choices of responses are determined in advance.
- The interviewee selects from the given responses.
- **Example:** *Thinking about the Canvas web site, about how often have you have used it during the last week: not at all / most days / every day / more than once a day*

- **Unstructured:**

- No list of questions: Relies on the generation of questions that naturally arise during the interview

- **Semi-Structured:**

- Preparing a list of questions in advance to ask each person interviewed
- Followed by conversation and follow-ups that can be different for each participant.



Question Type Examples [4]

- **Descriptive questions:** Describe your experience as a student in the Canvas course website.
- **Follow-up questions:** You said that you don't like an applications to be confusing. Can you describe an example of an experience you had when Canvas confused you?
- **Clarification questions:** You said that you preferred auto grading in canvas. What do you mean by auto grading?
- **Compare/Contrast questions:** You said that there was a big difference between the way you currently see grades in Canvas and the way you saw it in the previous application, Blackboard,. Describe some of these differences.
- **Opinion/Values questions:** What changes do you think should be made in this application?
- **Background questions:** What is your program of study

Interview Guideline ^[2,3,4]

- **Before Interview:**

- Recruitment: you want to ensure that you recruit a representative sample of users for your interviews.
- Create a script to ask questions from.
- Choose a good interview location (if it is a field interview, it should be conducted in the field).
- In case of video/audio recoding, make sure the devices are working.
- Prepare consent form if needed.
- Pilot and practice!

Interview Guideline, Cont. [2,3,4]

- **During Interview:**

- Introduce yourself and explain the goals of the interview.
 - *Example: The purpose of this interview is to get information that will help us redesign a Game that will be easy to use and meet the needs of those playing it.*
- Reassure about the ethical issues – recoding, signing consent form.
- Make your interviewee comfortable: *e.g., start with warm up questions.*
- Maintain control of the interview by:
 - Knowing what you want to find out
 - Asking the right questions to get that information
 - Providing appropriate feedback to the interviewee.
- Allow interviewees to respond to questions in their own words and to express their perspectives.
- Avoid leading questions, or questions that suggest a "yes" or "no" answer.
- Avoid very long questions, compound sentences , jargon & language that the interviewee may not understand
- Avoid unconscious biases e.g., gender stereotypes

Interview Guideline, Cont. [2,3,4]

- **During Interview:**

- Try to avoid “why” questions that seem to challenge the interviewee.
- Minimize demographic questions to avoid making interviewees uncomfortable.
- Do not agree or disagree with the user and remain neutral.
- If needed use probes to obtain further information after the original question is answered.
- Take an interest in what the interviewee is saying. Respect the interviewee.
- Include a few easy questions to defuse tension at the end.
- Thank interviewee.
- Make sure recording is finished and notes are taken.

- **After Interview:**

- Qualitative data: Compile/transcribe the results of interviews (can be challenging).
- Analyze and fetch insights from interviews.

Resources

For more information take a look at these resource as well:

1. [User Interviews: How, When, and Why to Conduct Them](#)
2. [How to Conduct User Interviews](#)
3. [Interviews](#)
4. [Interviewing Techniques](#)
5. [Contextual Interviews and How to Handle Them](#)