



UNIVERSITY OF  
MICHIGAN

# Observing Users

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## Understanding User Needs

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# Components of an Interview Protocol

Review

Overarching question

Introduction

Main interview

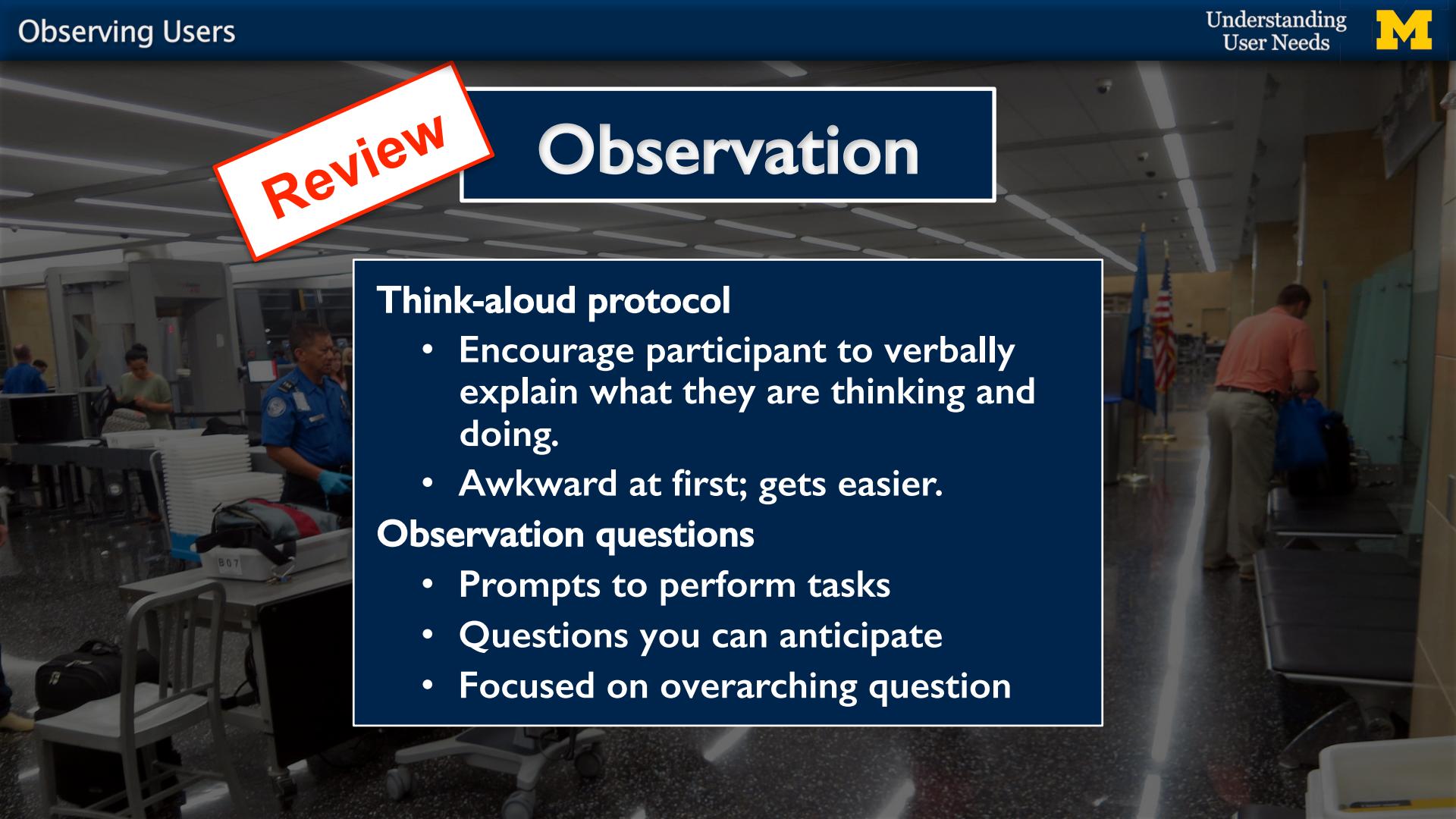
- Background / warm-up questions
- Core questions

Observation

- Think-aloud protocol
- Observation questions

Conclusion

One set for  
every type of  
interview  
participant



Review

# Observation

## Think-aloud protocol

- Encourage participant to verbally explain what they are thinking and doing.
- Awkward at first; gets easier.

## Observation questions

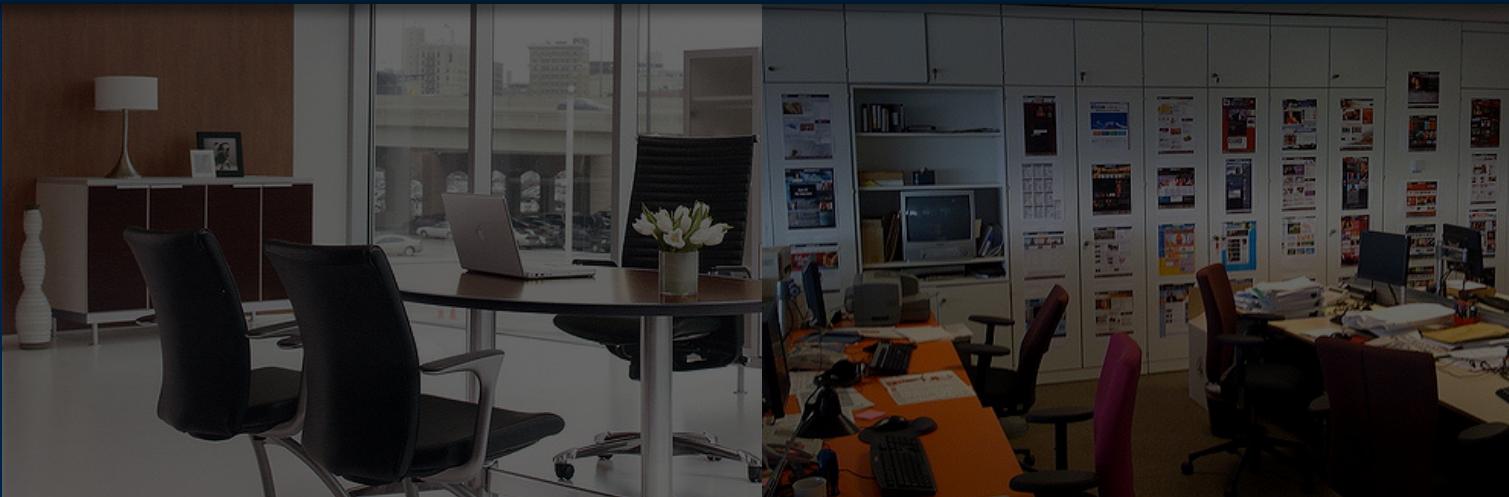
- Prompts to perform tasks
- Questions you can anticipate
- Focused on overarching question



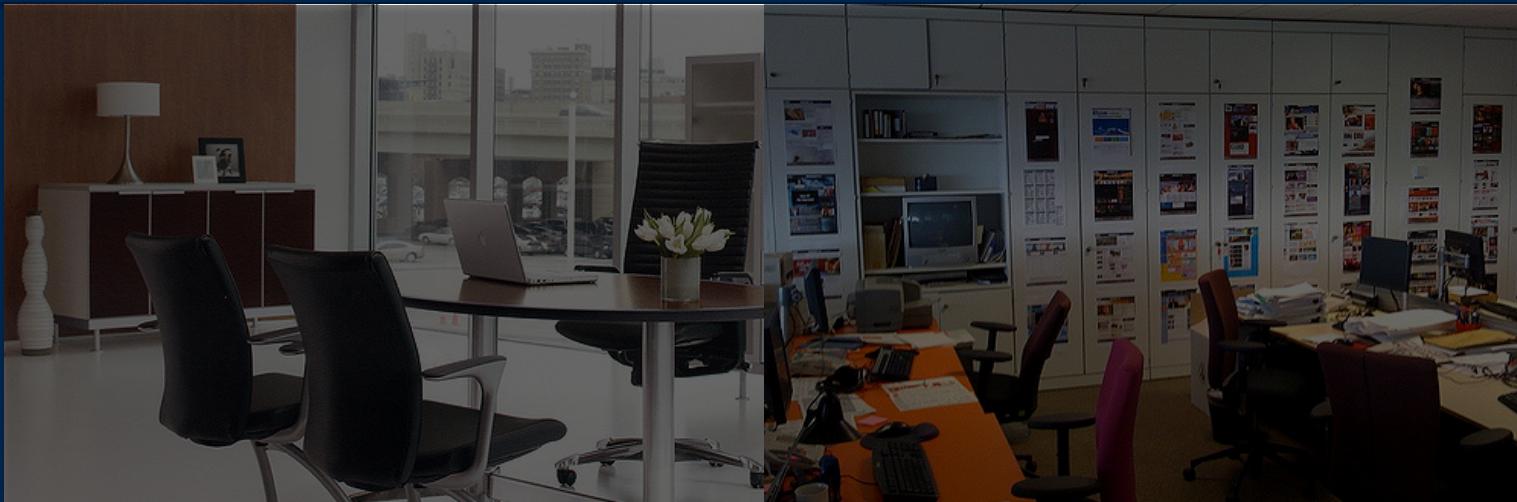
But, wait!  
Observation starts even  
before the interview.



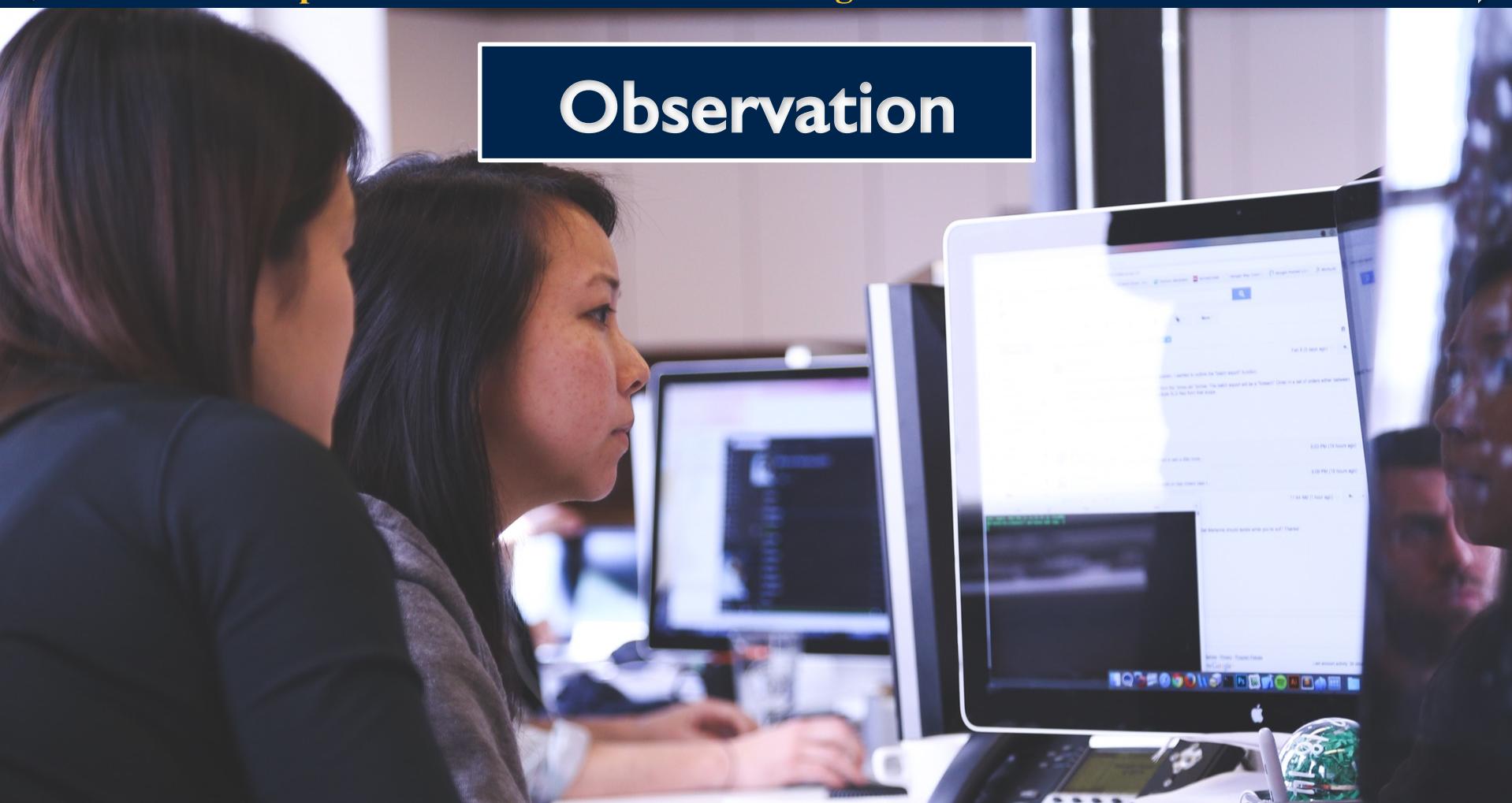




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# Observation



# Observation Tips [1/2]

**Ask participant to perform relevant tasks.**

**Think-aloud protocol**

- Ask participant to speak aloud and tell you what they are doing and thinking.
- It will be awkward at first, but encourage them if needed, by asking lots of quick questions:
  - “*What are you doing now?*”
  - “*What are you thinking when you do that?*”
  - *Etc.*

## Observation Tips [2/2]

**Take good notes.**

**Pay special attention to things they do that are *not* part of the main task:**

- Pauses
- Missteps / multiple attempts
- Intentional detours
- Etc.

**Ask questions, if you don't understand the motivation for an action.**

# Otherwise, Similar to Interviews

Maintain conversational tone.

Keep overarching question in mind.

Be curious!

Practice, practice, practice.

See module handout and suggested reading for more tips.