

Good Practices for Interview Protocol

Understanding User Needs

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Detective Columbo (played by Peter Falk)



Interviewing as **Science and Art**

Preparation

- Interview participant background
- Topic background
- Interview protocol
- Overarching question

Improvisation

- Rapport with interview participant
- Attention to the unexpected
- Unscripted questions
- Focus on overarching question







Good Questions

Not So Good Questions

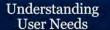
Open-ended

- "Why did you...?"
- "How did you go about...?
- "Can you tell me about...?"
- "Why do you think that is?"
- "How did you handle that situation?"

Closed-ended

- "Do you like X?"
- "How many times a week do you...?"
- "What is your favorite...?"

Sometimes, closed-ended questions are appropriate, but they shouldn't dominate the protocol.





Good Questions

Not So Good Questions

Specific, concrete

- "Tell me about the last time that you did..."
- "Can you think of a specific instance when...?"

Abstract, generalized

- "What do you normally do when...?"
- "What is the typical way in which...?"

These aren't bad questions, but you want to be sure that you've asked for concrete details, also.





Good Questions

Not So Good Questions

Non-leading, judgment-free

- "What option do you prefer?"
- "What do you think was the reason for that?"
- "How did you try to address the problem?"

Leading, judgmental

- "So, you prefer X over Y?"
- "Was it because of a bad process that the task was difficult?"
- "Why didn't you use feature Z?"





Organization and Flow

Cluster related questions together.

Within each cluster, arrange them in a meaningful order:

- Chronological
- Narrative
- Broad to narrow, or narrow to broad
- Etc.

Arrange clusters in a meaningful order.

Save any sensitive questions for the end.





Follow-Up Questions

Under each core question, add follow-up questions.

Use bulleted lists.

Follow-up question types:

- Generic: "Why?" "How did that happen?" "Tell me more."
- Prompts for specific issues: "Did you think about X?" "Or Y?"
- Repetition: "Could you tell me about another time when...?"
- Etc.

Think through the order of these, as well.

Again, you will probably not ask all of the follow-up questions.



Final Thoughts

Goals of protocol:

- Preparation
- Guide during interview

Memorize the overall flow of the protocol.

Remember – you will *not* read protocol questions one after the other.

See module handout for more information.