

DO'S AND DON'TS OF USER INTERVIEWS

Do...

Ask open ended questions

Ask open-ended questions to evoke stories. Don't waste time asking Yes/No questions.

Don't: Do you eat fried food at team lunch?

Do: What type of food do you eat at team lunch?

Ask about actual behavior

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Don't: How many times do you plan to go to the gym this week?

Do: Tell me about your gym habits during the past week.

Focus on specific instances

Ask about specific past instances to establish a baseline of behavior

Try: Tell me about the best time...

Try: Tell me about the worst time...

Try: Tell me about the most recent time...

Push people to focus

Ask people to summarize their thoughts and focus on the most important points.

Try: Can you help me summarize that in a sentence?

Try: So I'm hearing you say _____, is that accurate? Did I miss anything?

Use silence

Use silence as a way to get people to continue talking. People are compelled to fill up awkward silences, and you may wind up with a compelling story or an unexpected discovery.

Ask simple questions

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Don't: When you're at the gym, do you use free weights, or weight machines, or like, bands or straps, or..

Do: What equipment do you use at the gym?

Ask "why" more often

Ask "Why?" more often to get to the heart of the matter.

Do: Can you tell me more about that?

Don't...

Ask leading questions

Leave room for people to tell you what they think without constraining them to a limited number of options.

Don't: Would you say that cats are better than dogs?

Do: Do you prefer dogs or cats? What pets do you prefer?

Be too specific

Don't be too specific. You never know what people will say, so don't reduce possibilities.

Don't: A lot of people think this bagel is stale what are your thoughts on that?

Do: What do you think about this bagel?

Prime people

Don't imply to people that they should answer in a specific way

Don't: Don't you like this website?

Do: Tell me what you think about this website.

Generalize

Discuss specific instances and past behaviors. People are too biased when they generalize.

Don't: What do you usually do when...

Do: Can you tell me about a specific time/the most recent time you...

Assume

Listen, don't push for something specific. You don't know for sure why they're answering the way they are.

Don't: Assume that just because you may do the exact same thing as an interviewee you know the reasons why. That does not necessarily mean you are doing it for the same exact reason.

Do: Ask more questions to probe at their behaviors and draw your own conclusions.

Solution for others

Don't just ask people what they would like. People are experts in their own problems, not the best solutions for everyone experiencing that problem.

Don't: Would _____ make this easier for you?

Do: What do you think about this bagel?