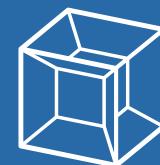


# How to plan, run, and learn from research interviews

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ZEITSPACE  
SESSIONS

# Welcome



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# Learning goals

By the end of this session, you will better understand...

- when interviews are useful (and when they are not)
- three important interview types
- how to write questions that help reach your interview goals
- the arc of an interview
- probes you can use to steer or advance an interview
- how to start to work with the data you gather

# Agenda

- **Activity 1 — Interview Taboo**
- Types of interviews
- Semi-structured interviews
- Arc of the interview
- Writing good interview questions
- **Activity 2 — What was the question?**
- Directing the interview with probes
- **Activity 3 — Reworking questions**
- After the interview
- Resources

# Activity 1 — “Interview Taboo”

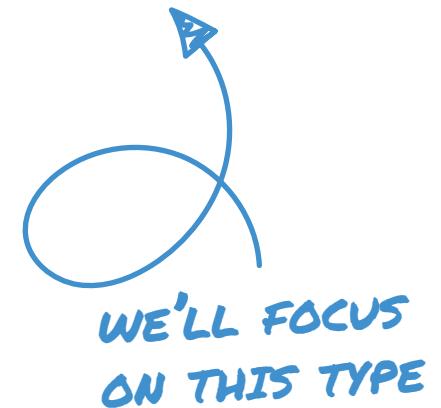


You will...

- be paired up in breakout rooms for 10 minutes
- take turns interviewing each other (about 5 minutes each)
- open the correct interview question guide (we'll share the link in the chat)

# Types of interviews

- structured interviews
- semi-structured interviews
- unstructured interviews



# Semi-structured interviews

STRUCTURED

—  
FIXED SET OF  
QUESTIONS

NO FREEDOM  
TO REACT TO  
ANSWERS

SEMI-STRUCTURED

—  
QUESTION SET  
WITH SUGGESTED  
PROBES & TOPICS

BALANCE OF  
FLEXIBILITY &  
GUIDANCE

UNSTRUCTURED

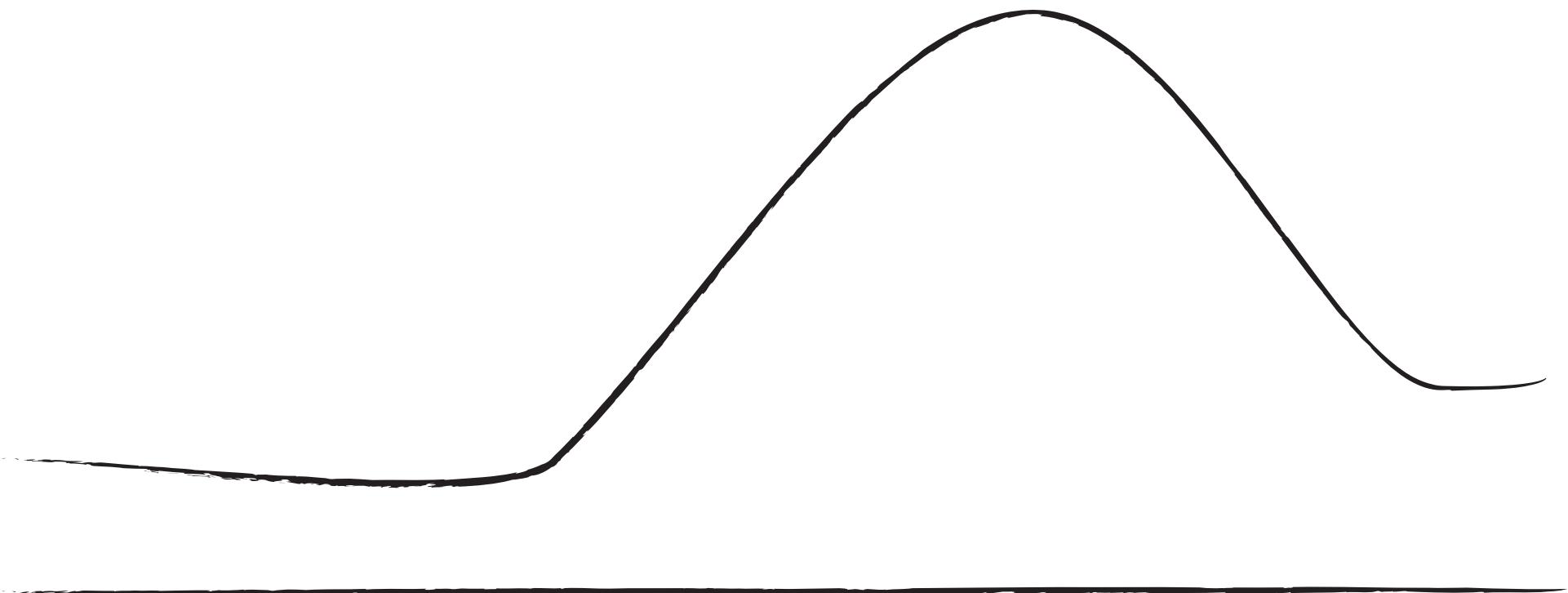
—  
NO QUESTIONS,  
JUST TOPICS

FREEDOM TO  
EXPLORE AND  
CHANGE COURSE

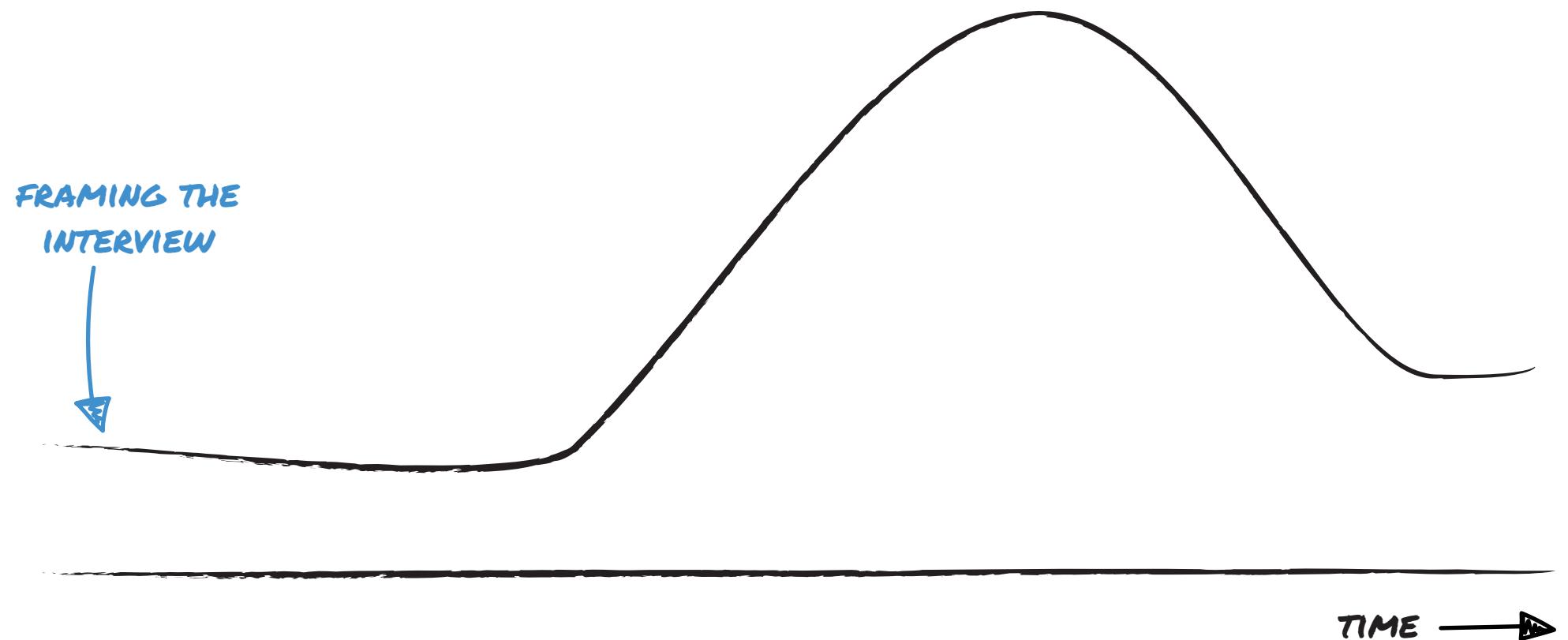
# When to use semi-structured interviews

- get a deep understanding of a particular domain and use cases
- capture stories from participants that relate to overall themes
- identify areas to explore further or validate with other research methods, before you know what could be designed
- find out the “unknown unknowns”

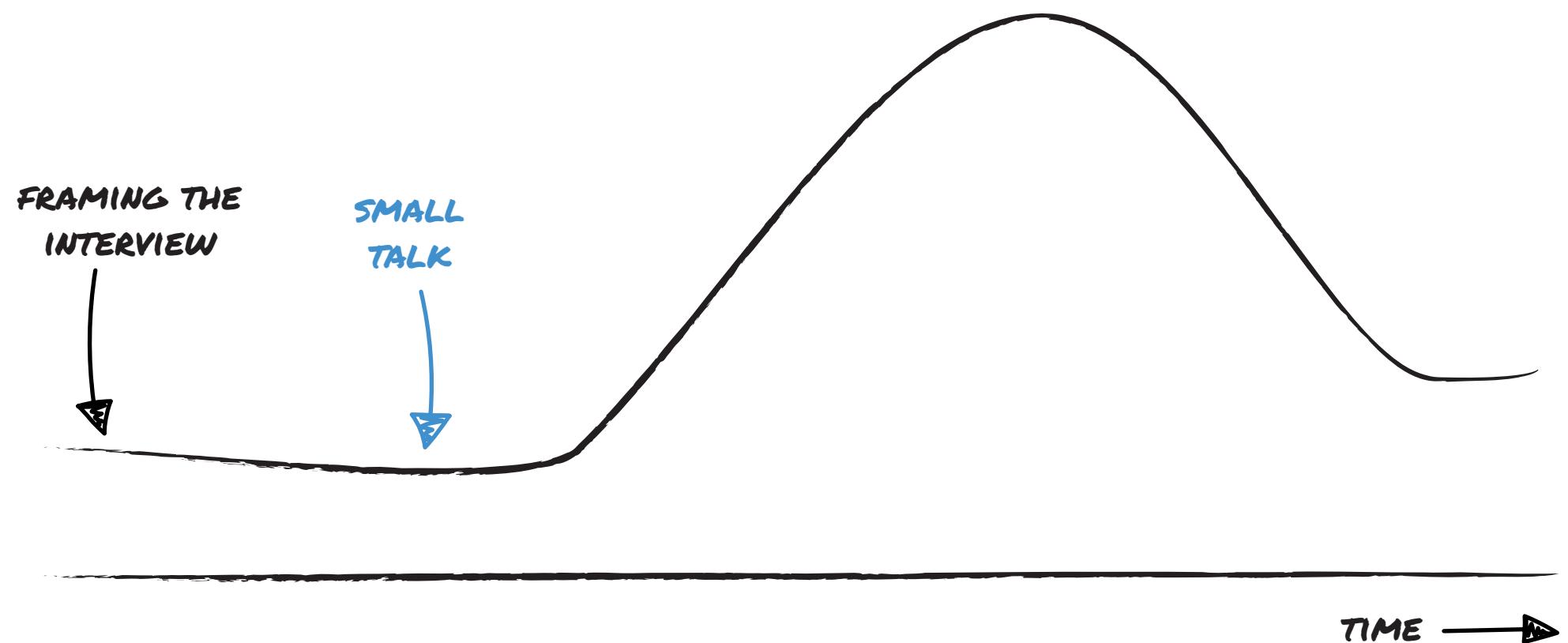
# The arc of an interview



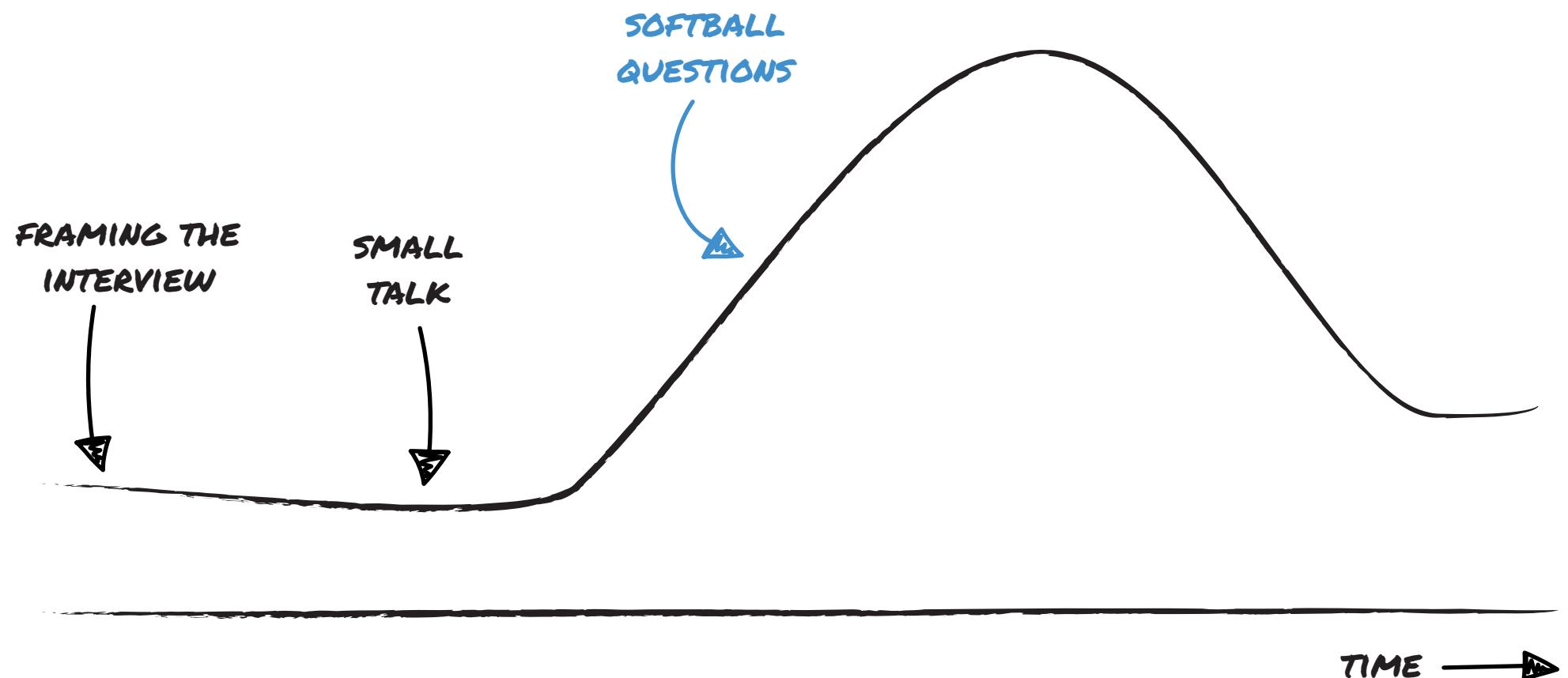
# Framing the interview



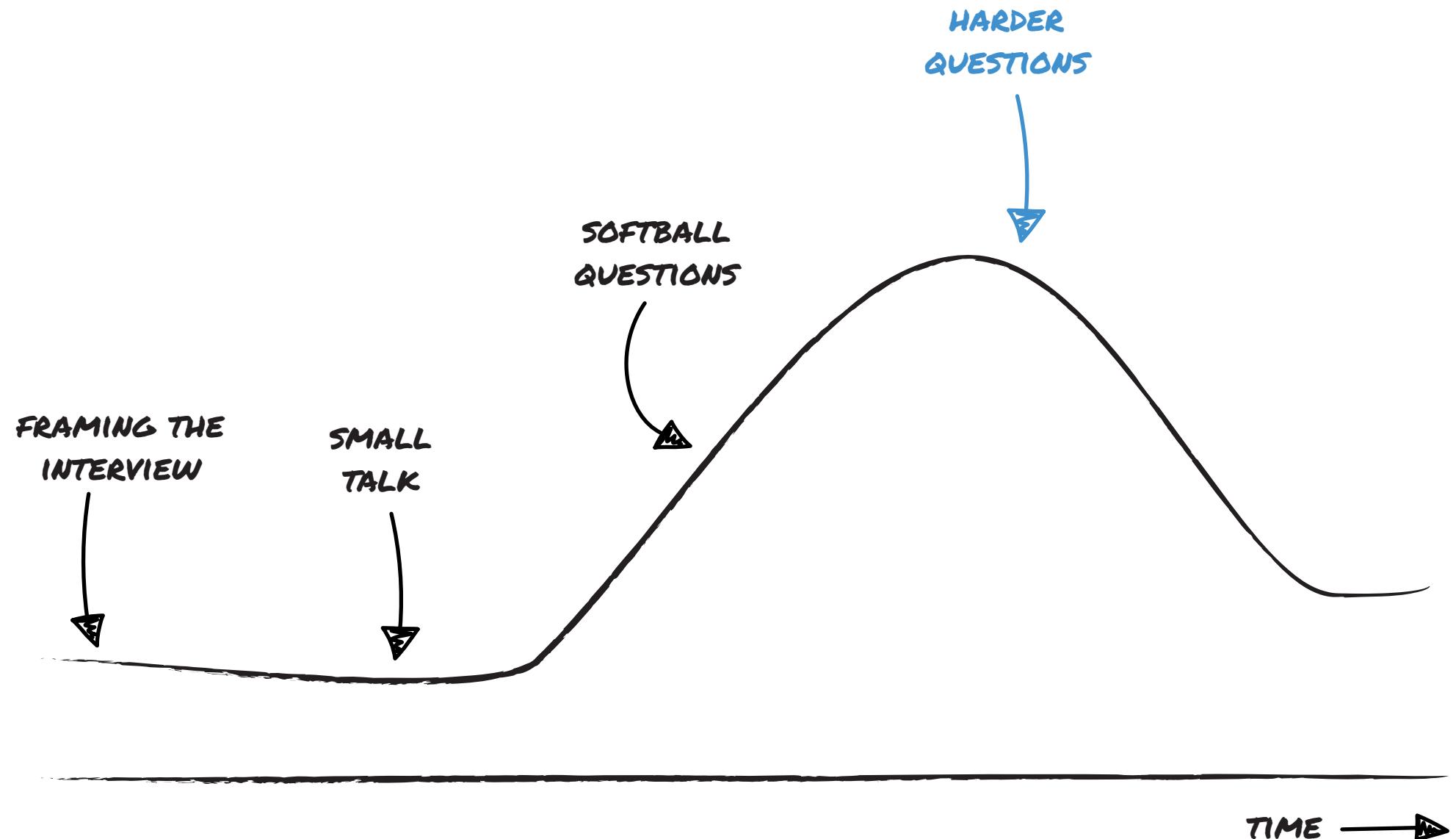
# Small talk



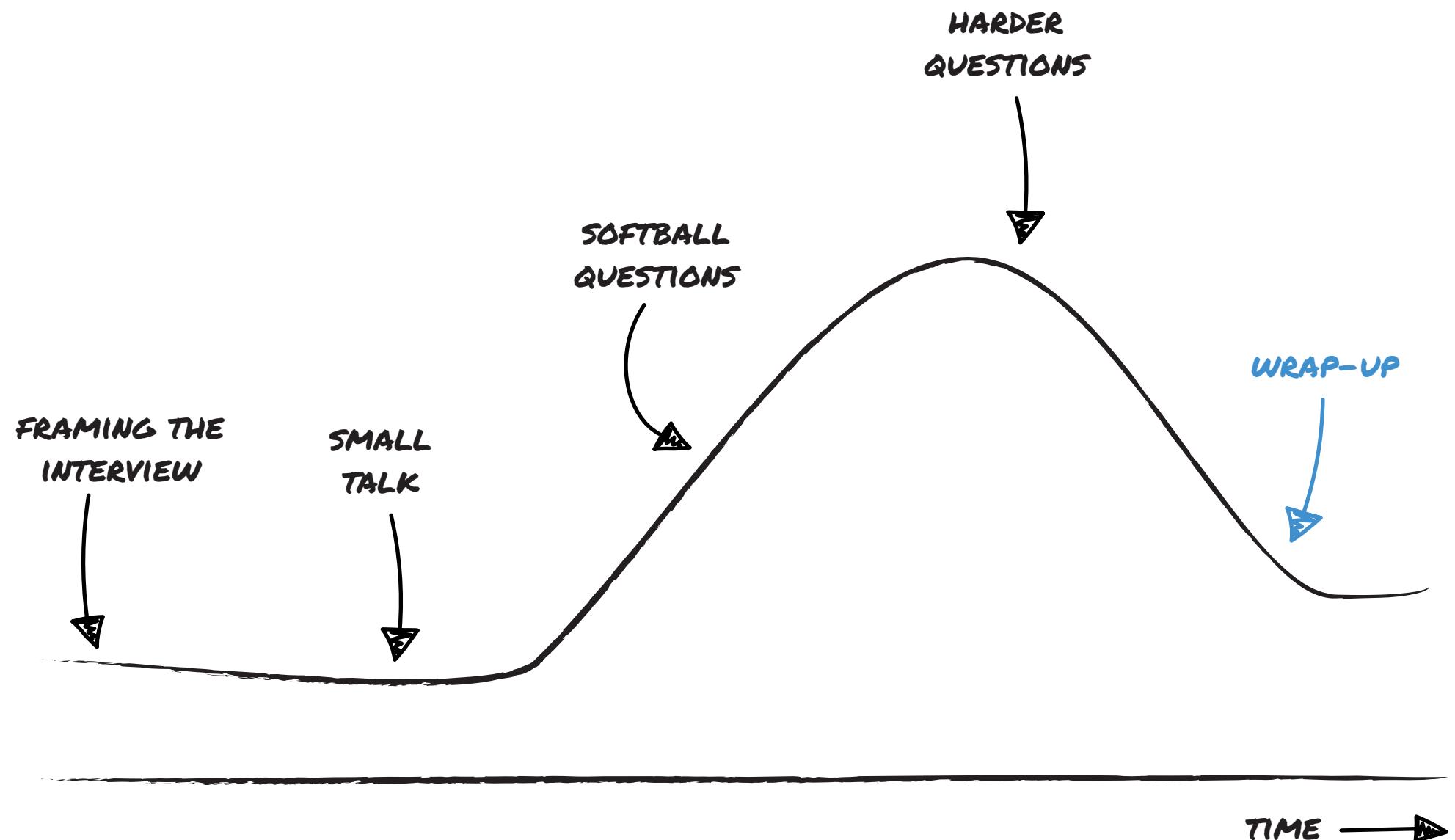
# Softball questions



# Build up to complex questions



# Wrap-up



# Mechanics of the interview

- informed consent or NDAs
- recording the interview
- taking notes
- ethical research



There is nothing like a good interview question.

And these are *nothing* like a good interview question.

# Closed questions

Was that  
difficult?

Yes.

# Biased wording

Was it  
frustrating  
when that  
happened?

Um...sure?

# Double barrel or chained questions

How long have  
you used Google  
Drive...

...and would  
you recommend  
it to a friend?

...and what do  
you think of how  
it syncs...

# Confusing questions

Do you agree  
that Twitter is  
not addictive?

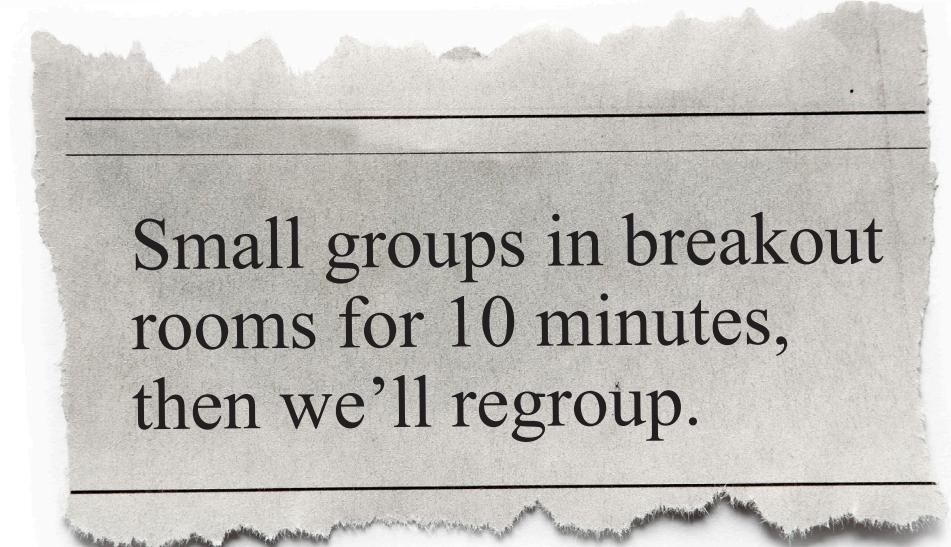
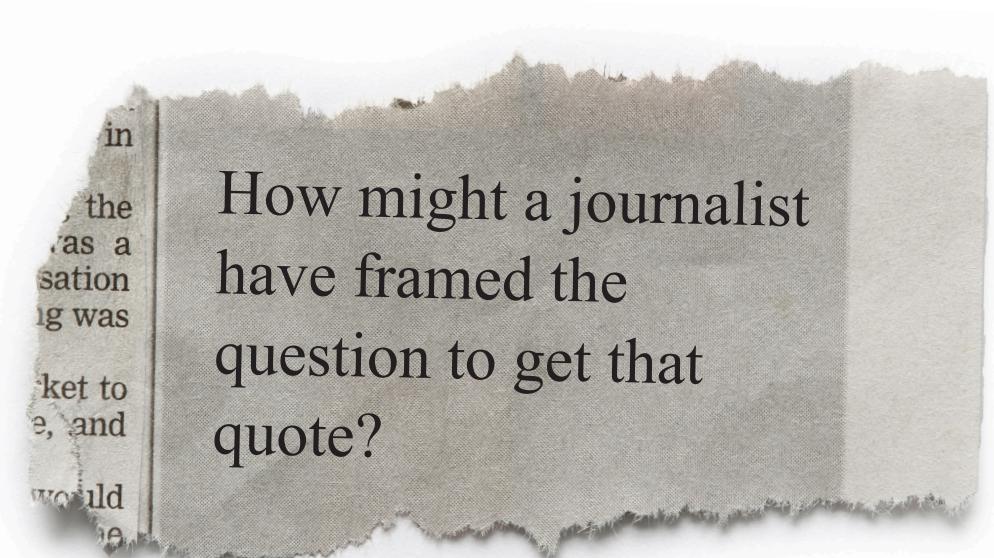
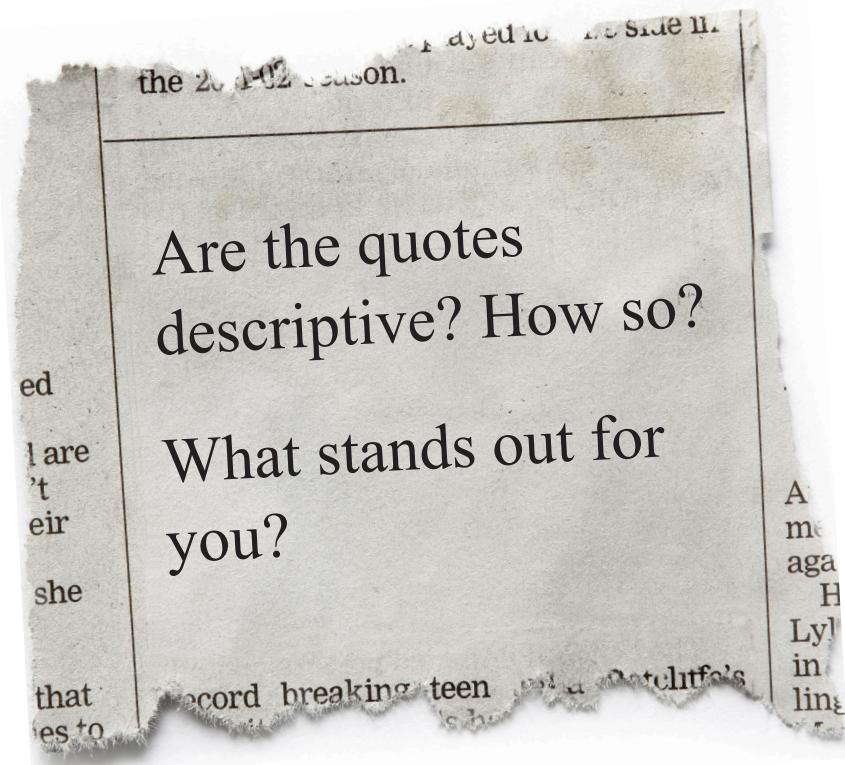
Huh?

# Hot button words

Do you read more  
liberal newspapers  
such as...?

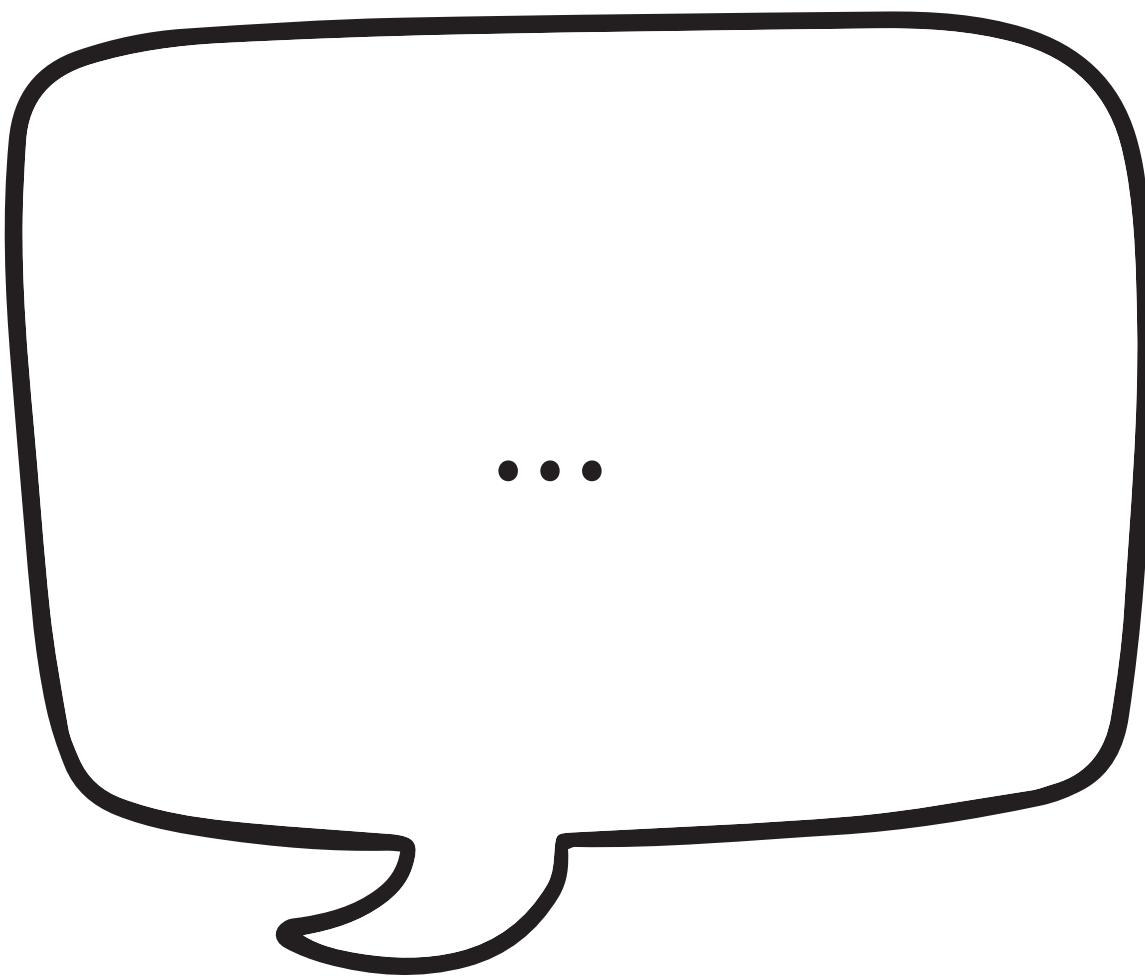
Hey, wait a  
minute...

# Activity 2 — Guess the question

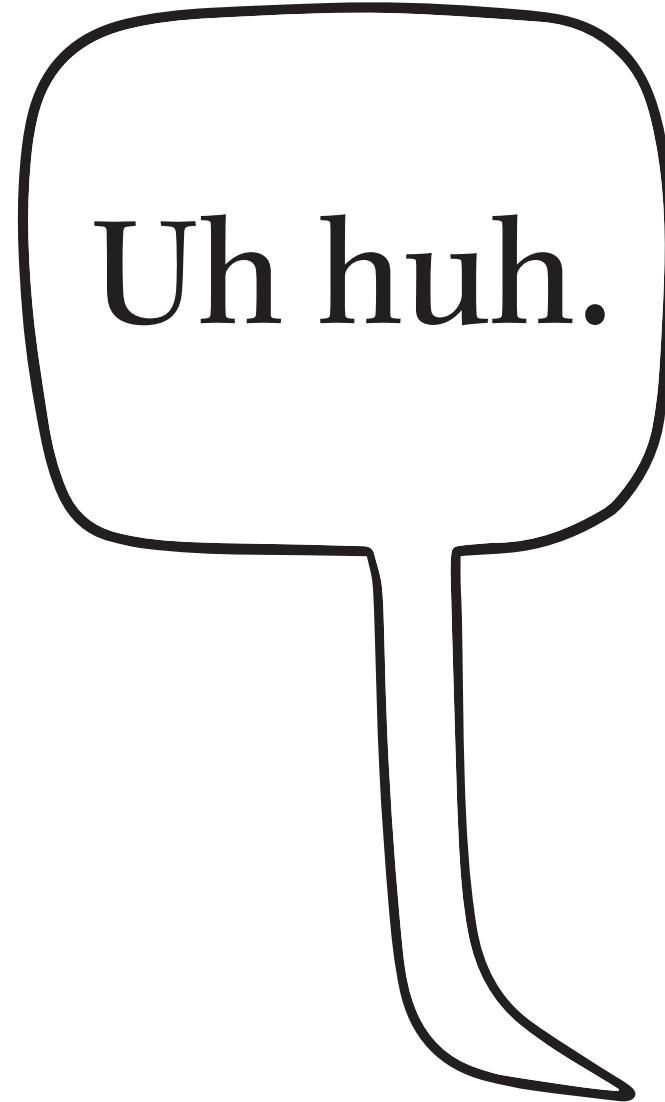
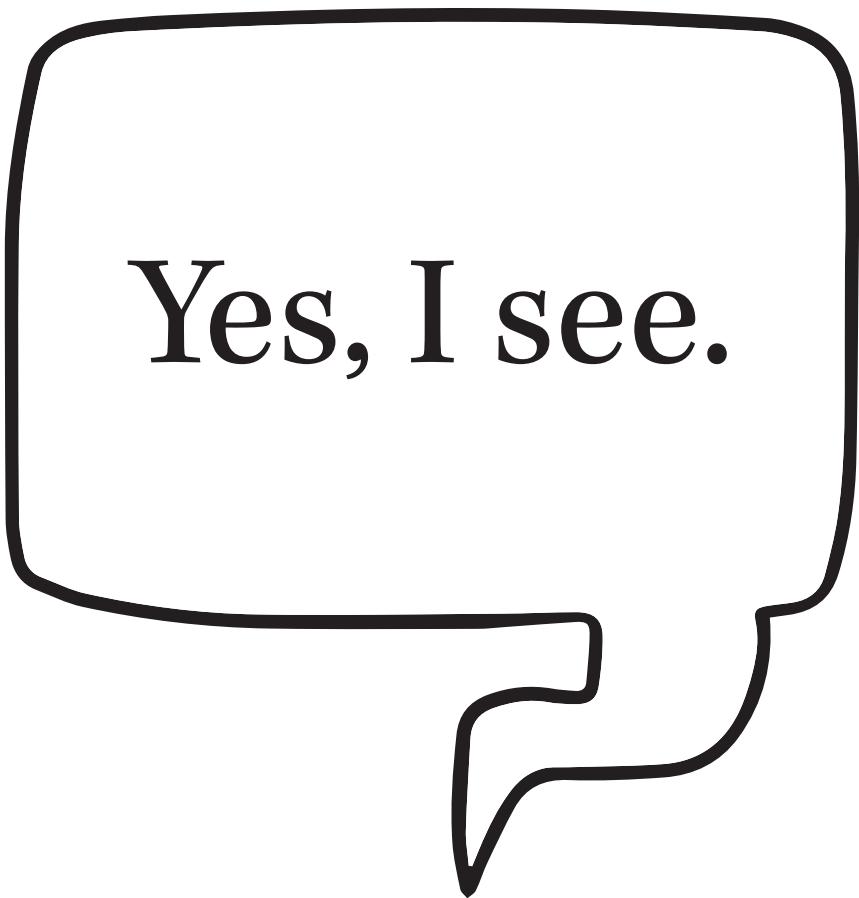


*Probes* are verbal tools that help an interviewer direct the conversation.

Silence is golden...



# Neutral probes



# Clarification probes

So you're saying...

What do  
you mean  
by...?

# Ask for more detail probes

How did  
you do that?

Why exactly did  
you say that?

Could you  
tell me more  
about that?

Can you  
give me an  
example of...?

# Emotion probes

Can you tell me why  
you reacted that way?

# Variation probes

How has your approach changed over time?

Do you always perform the task this way?

# Long question probes

How do you make a sale?

*vs.*

What are all the things that  
you have to consider when  
you are trying to sell this  
product to a new customer?

# Difficult situations

I appreciate your concerns, but given the goals of today's interview, I'd really like to focus on...

I hear you and can set up a separate time to talk about your concerns. But, given the limited time we have today, I'd really like to make sure I have enough time to talk to you about...

I know this situation is frustrating, but I'm trying to understand what's happening with *X*, and I need your help to do that.

“The opposite of talking isn’t listening. For many people, the opposite of talking is waiting.”

—Fran Lebowitz, author and public speaker

## Activity 3 — Reworking questions

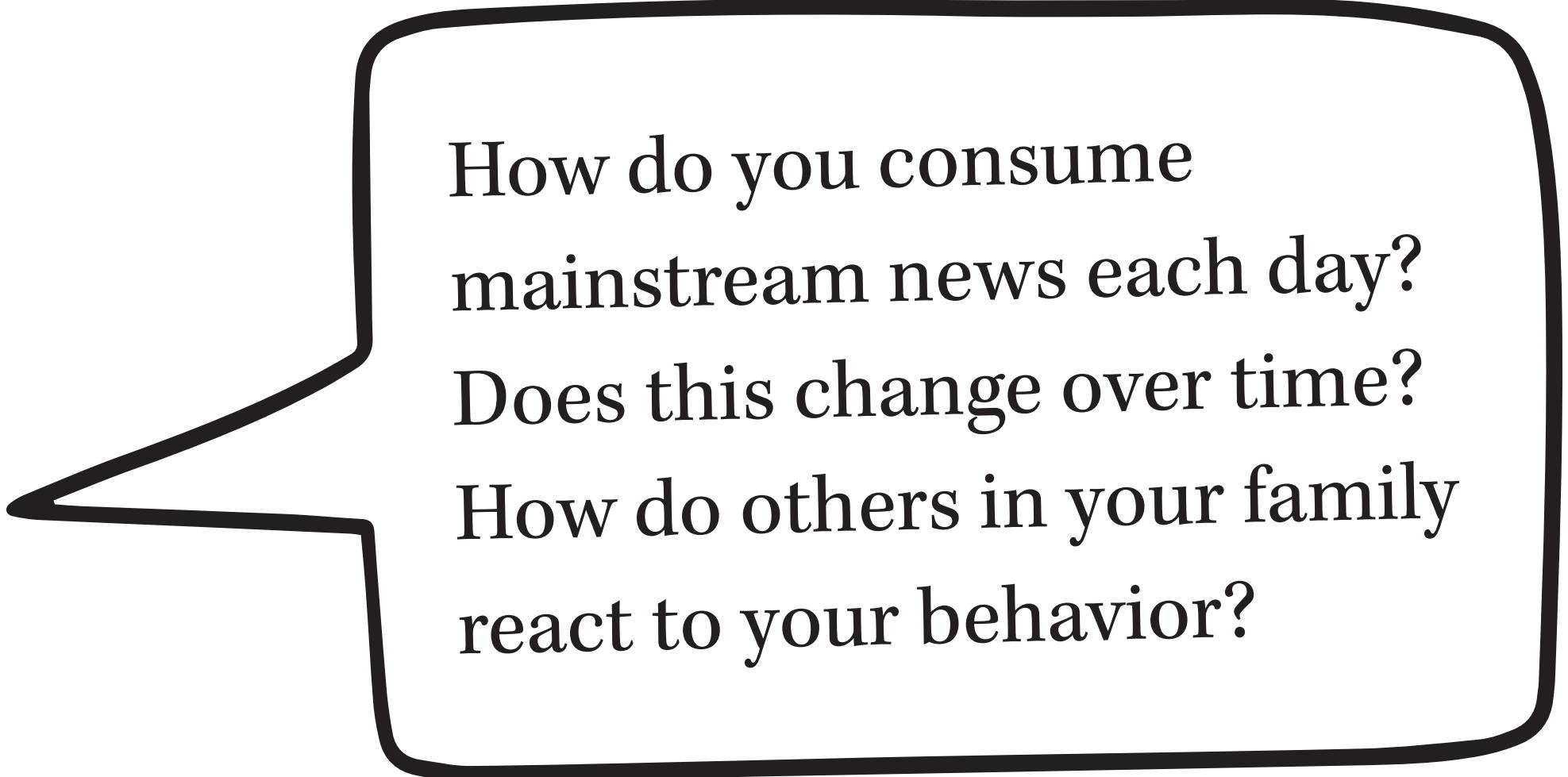
How can we make  
these questions  
better?

# How could we improve this question?



Do you drive a car?

# How could we improve this question?



How do you consume mainstream news each day?  
Does this change over time?  
How do others in your family react to your behavior?

# How could we improve this question?

Do you find your organization still gets stuck in a learning cycle without ever moving forward, or is that changing?

# How could we improve this question?

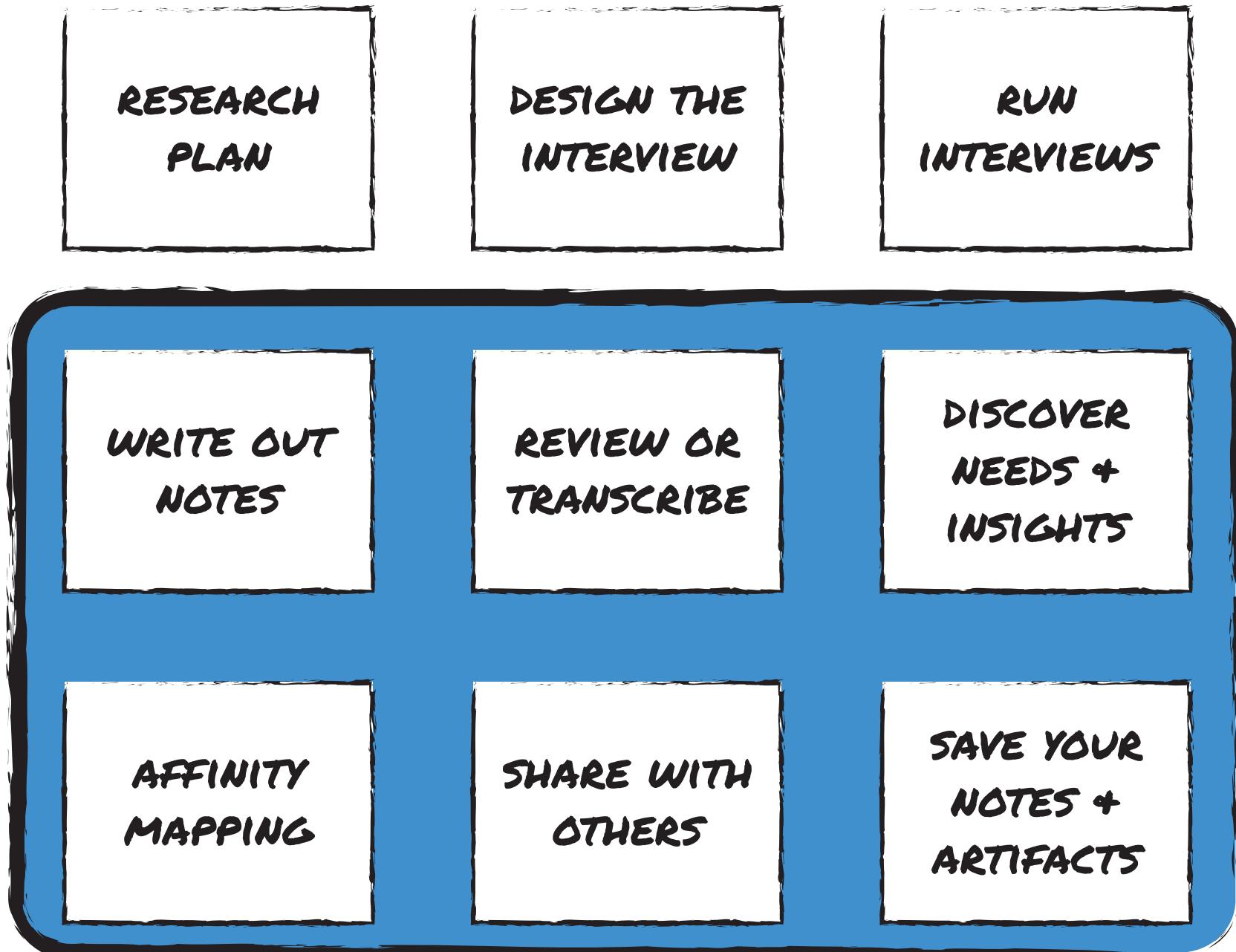
Other people I've interviewed have told me that they find grocery shopping a frustrating experience.

Do you agree?

# How could we improve this question?

Tell me about the last time  
you had to pay a bill.

# I did the interview; now what?



# Practice to make progress.

Practice  
active  
listening

Watch  
and read  
interviews

Review  
your  
interviews

# Resources

[github.com/zeitspace/interviewing-session](https://github.com/zeitspace/interviewing-session)

- session slide deck
- activity walkthroughs
- links to useful books, websites, articles, tools

# Thank you!



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