

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”

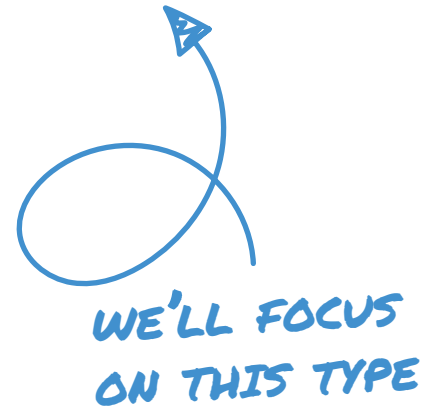


You will...

- 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

—

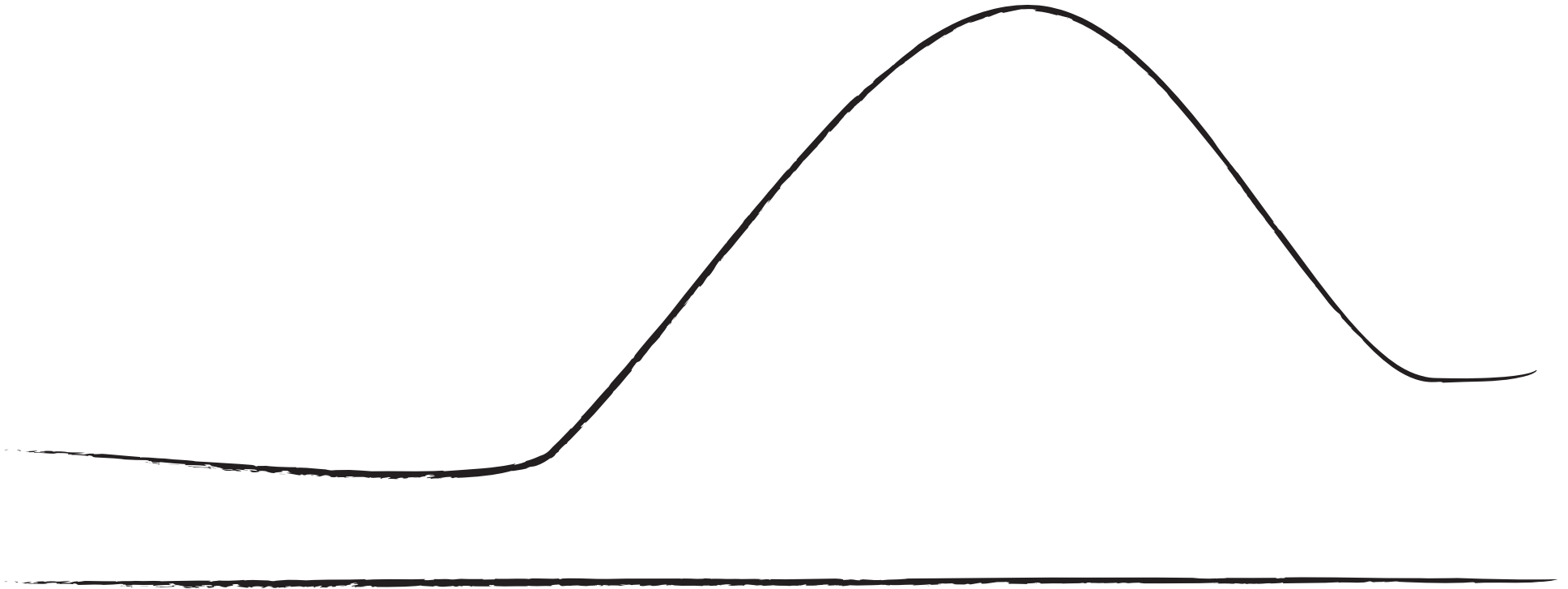
**NO QUESTIONS,
JUST TOPICS**

**FREEDOM TO
EXPLORE AND
CHANGE COURSE**

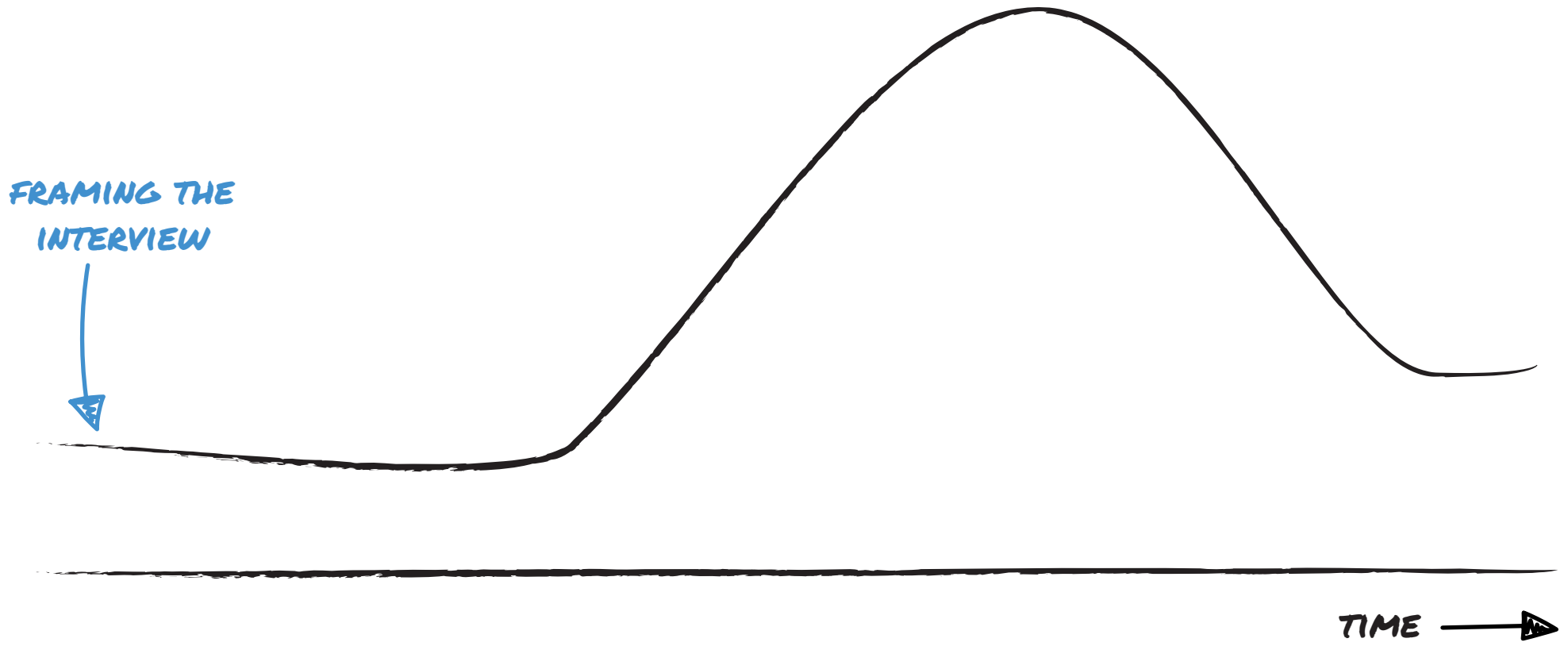
When to use semi-structured interviews

- 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”

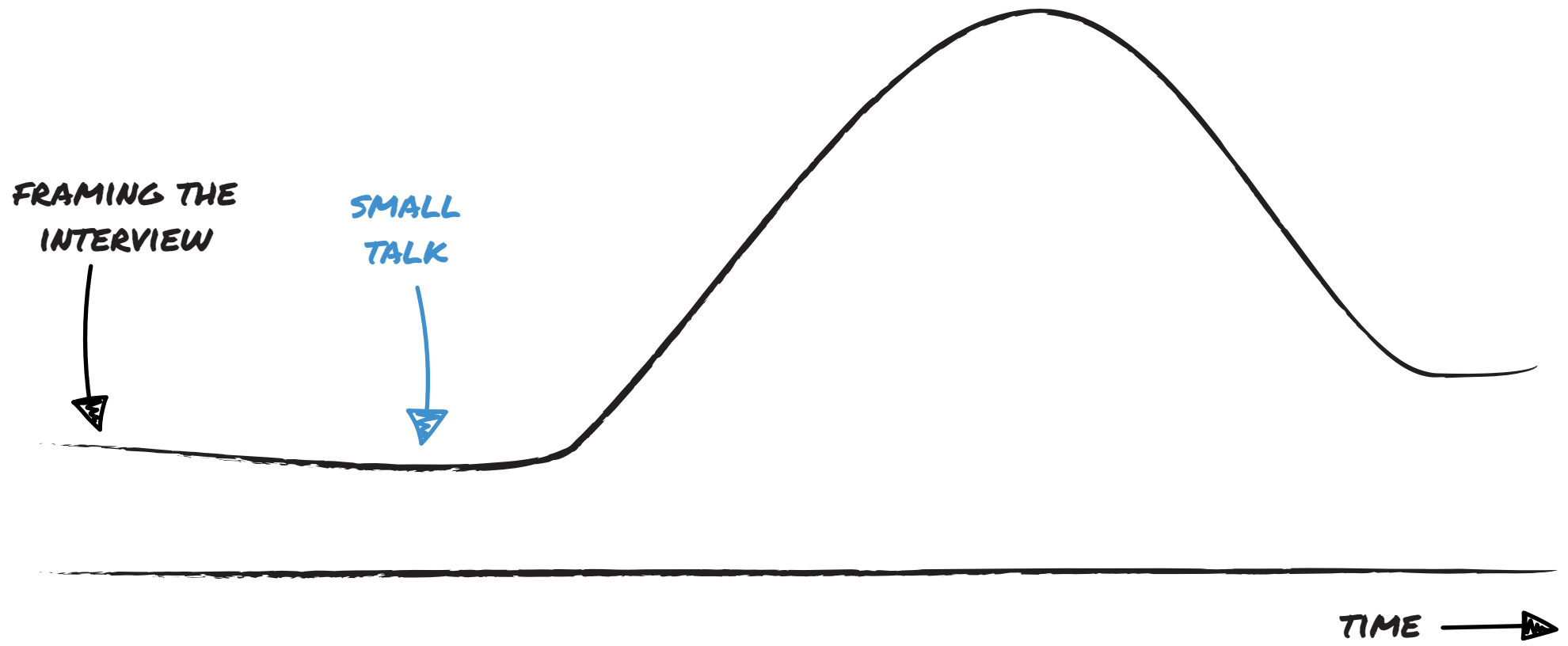
The arc of an interview



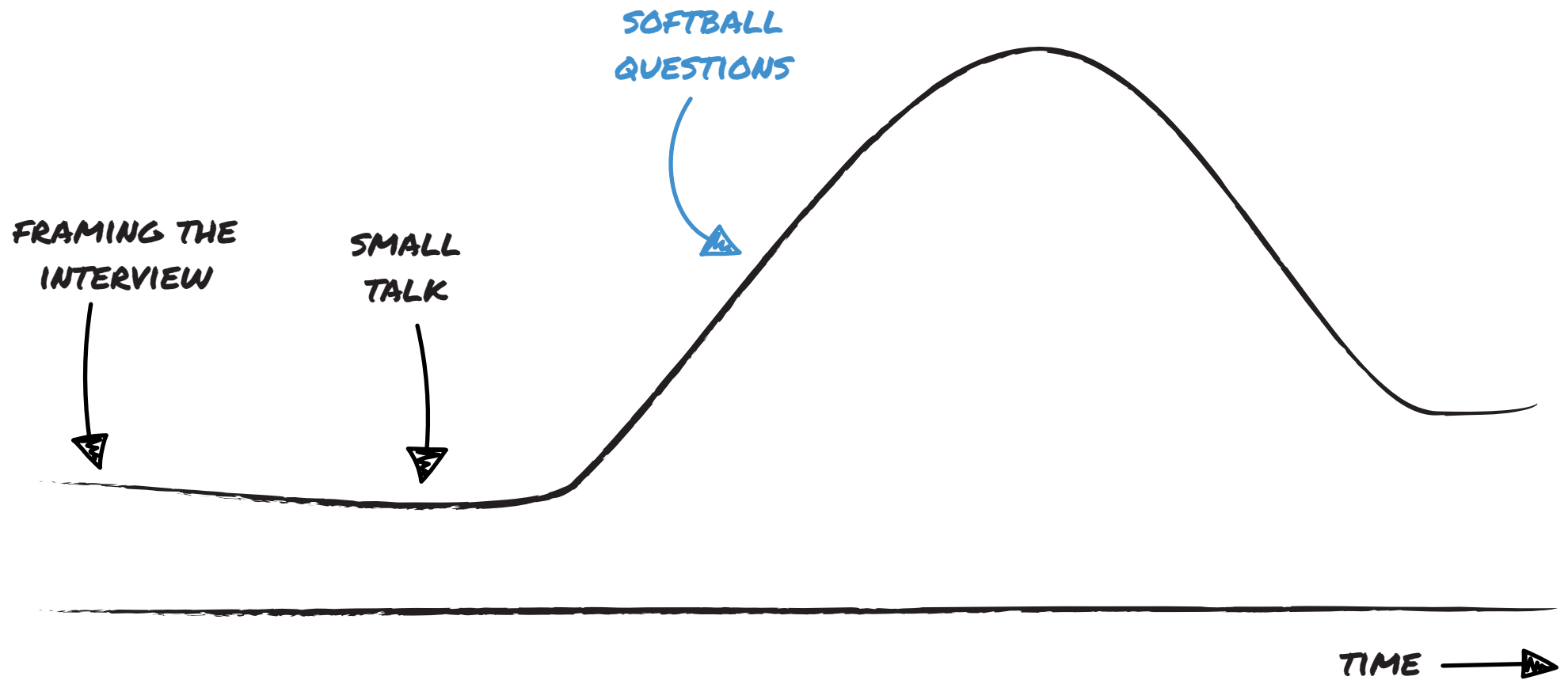
Framing the interview



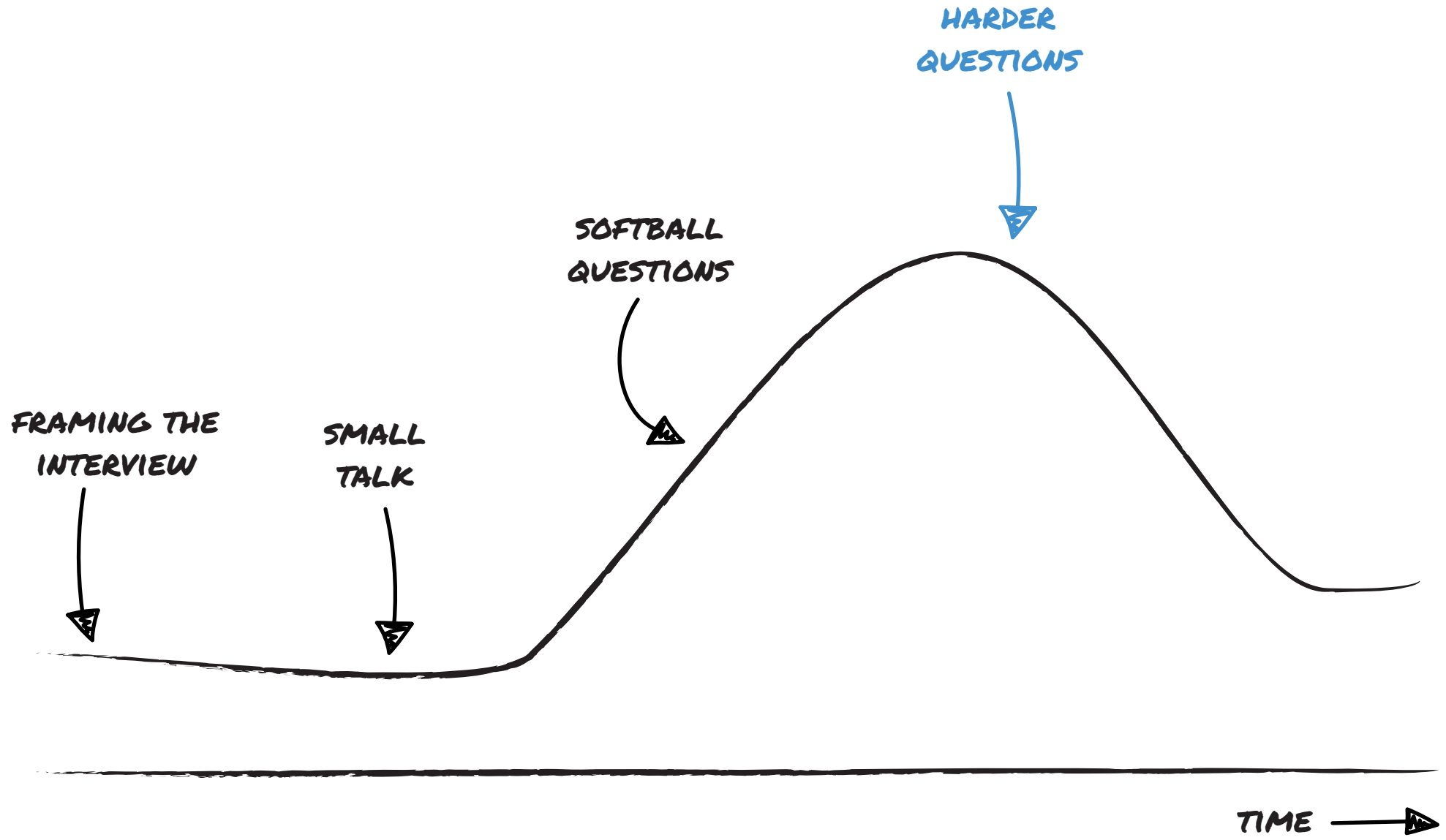
Small talk



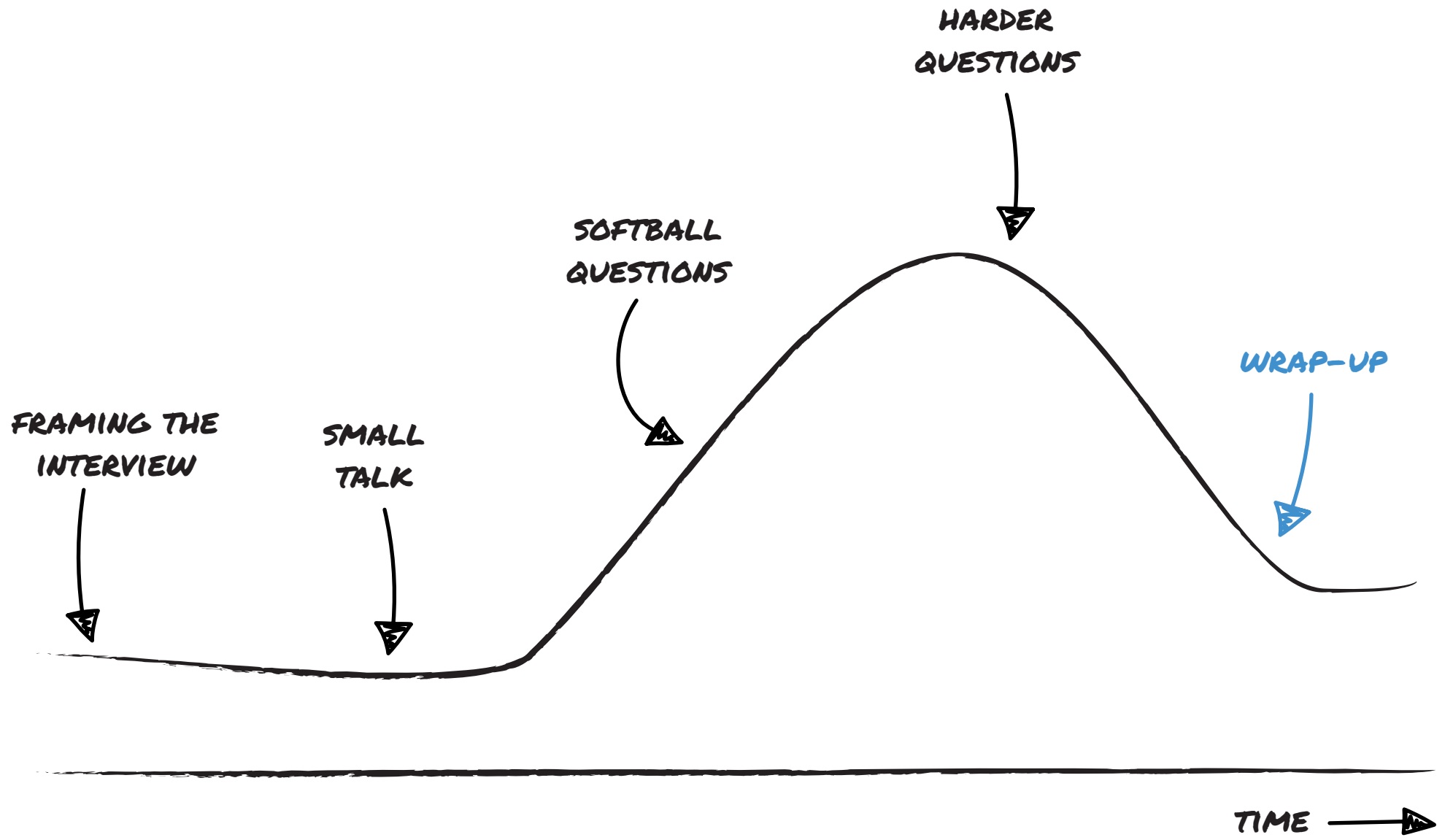
Softball questions



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

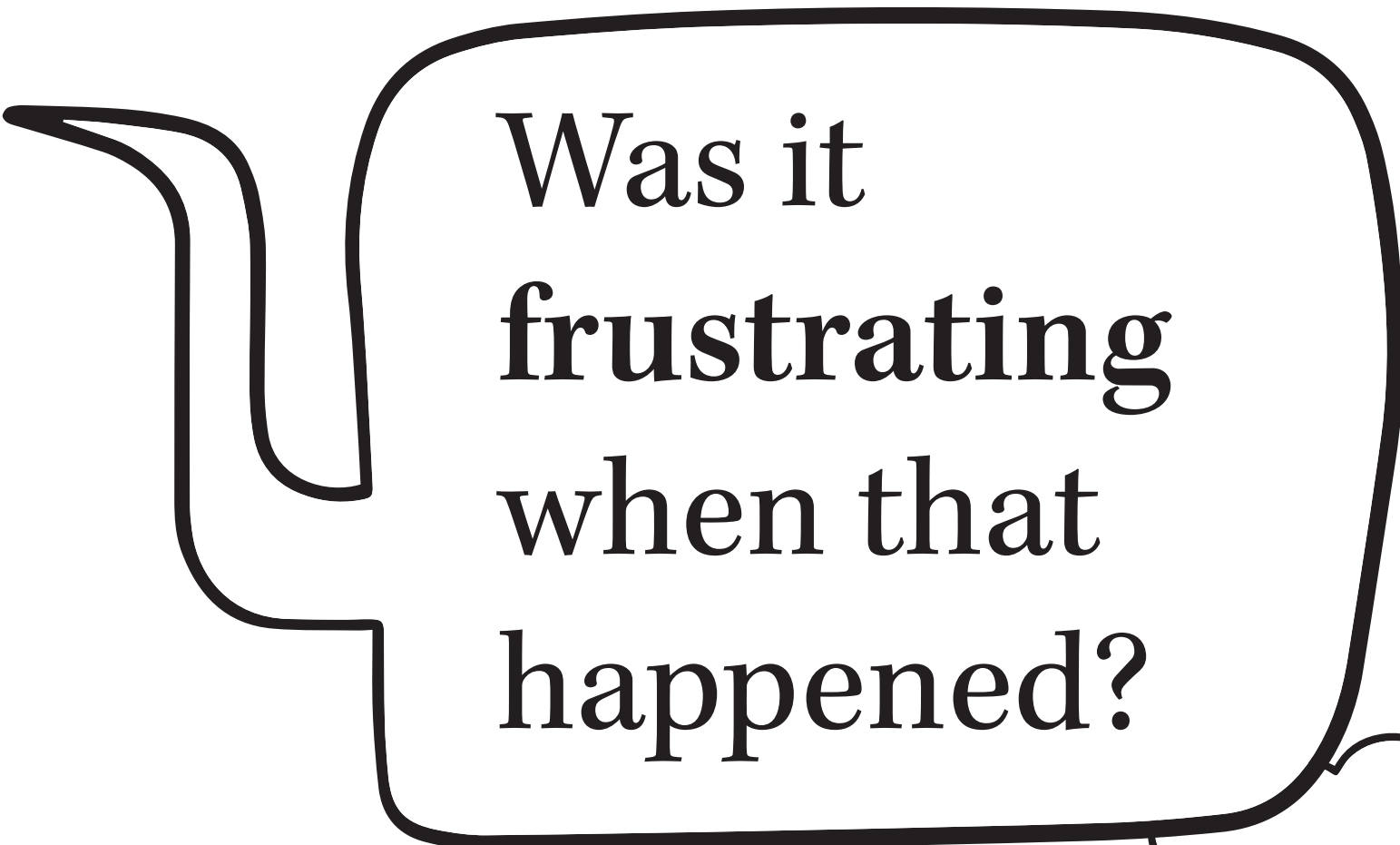


Was that
difficult?



Yes.

Biased wording



Was it
frustrating
when that
happened?



Um...sure?

Double barrel or chained questions

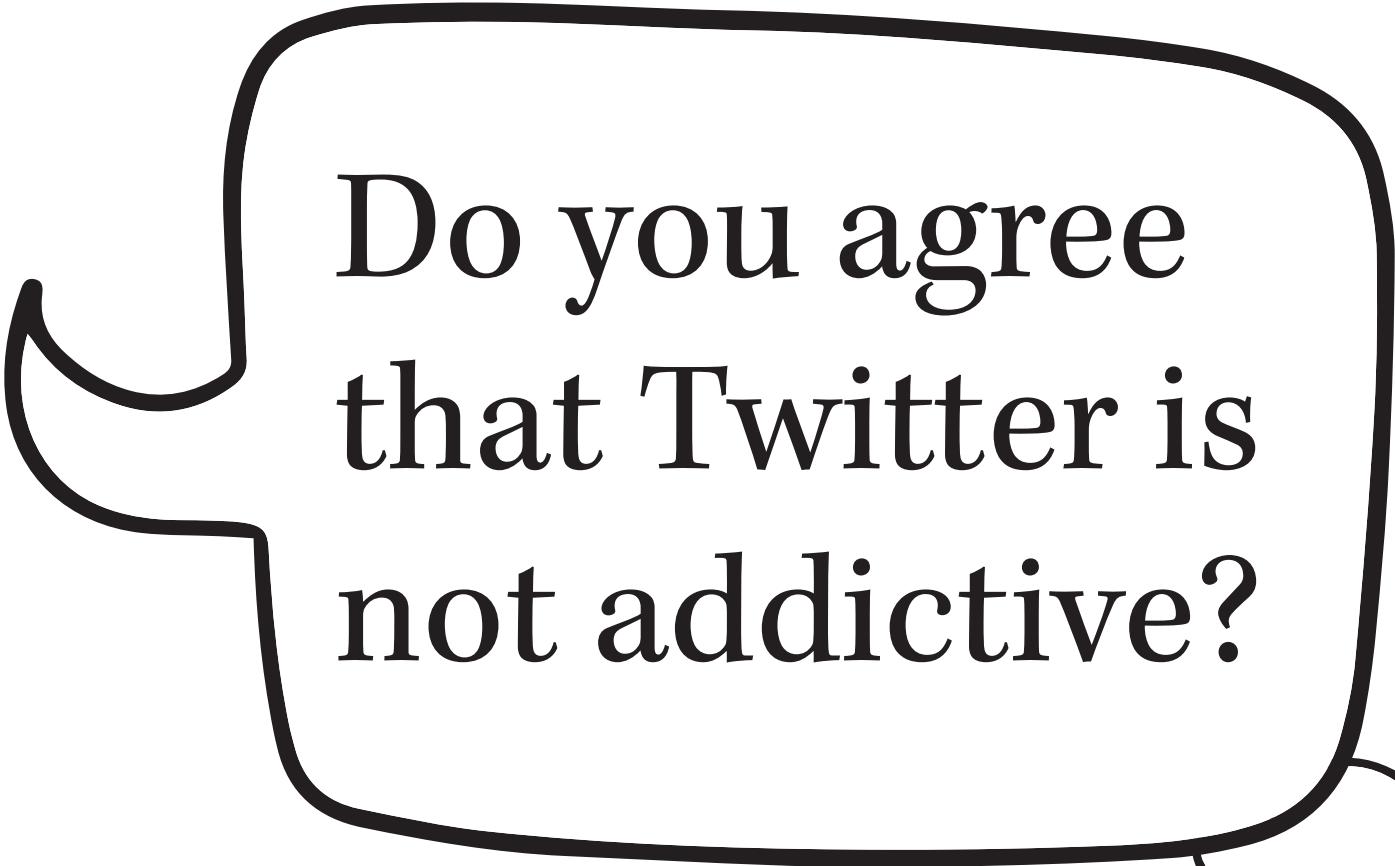


How long have
you used Google
Drive...

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

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

Confusing questions




Do you agree
that Twitter is
not addictive?



Huh?

Hot button words

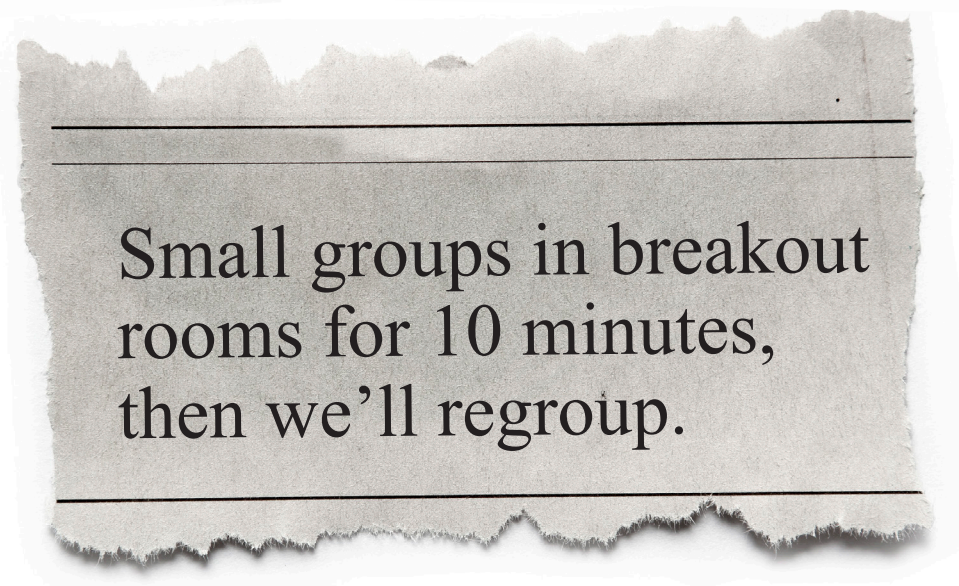
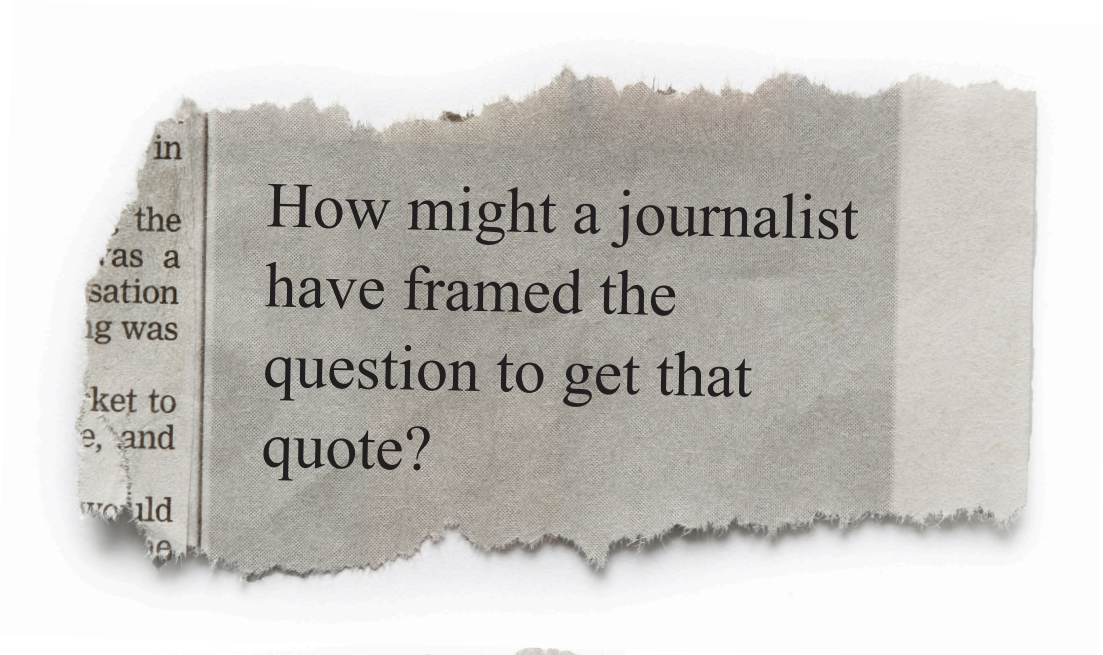
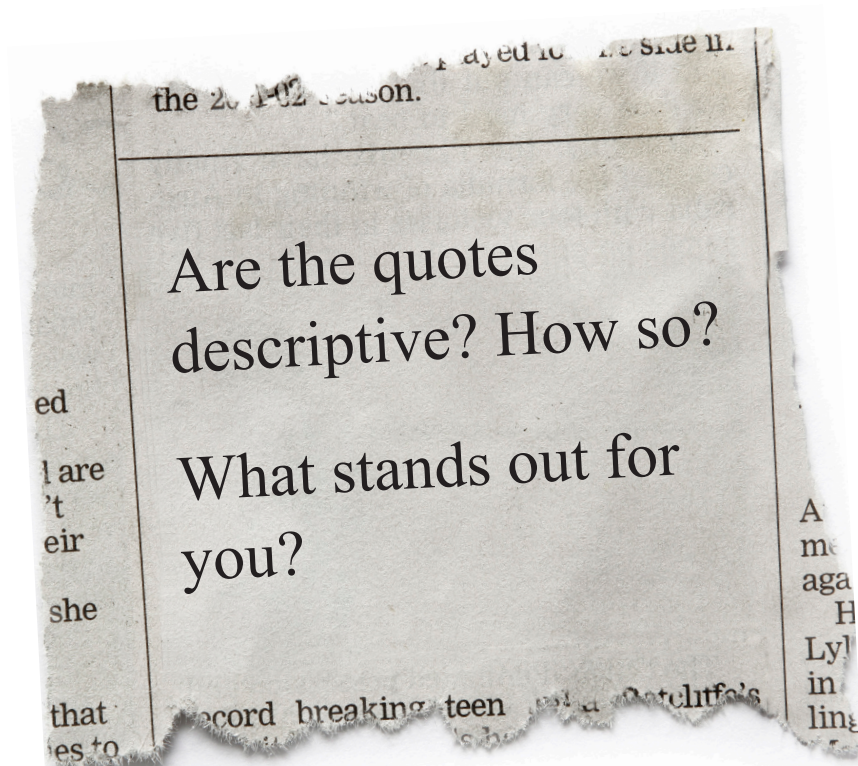


Do you read more
liberal newspapers
such as...?



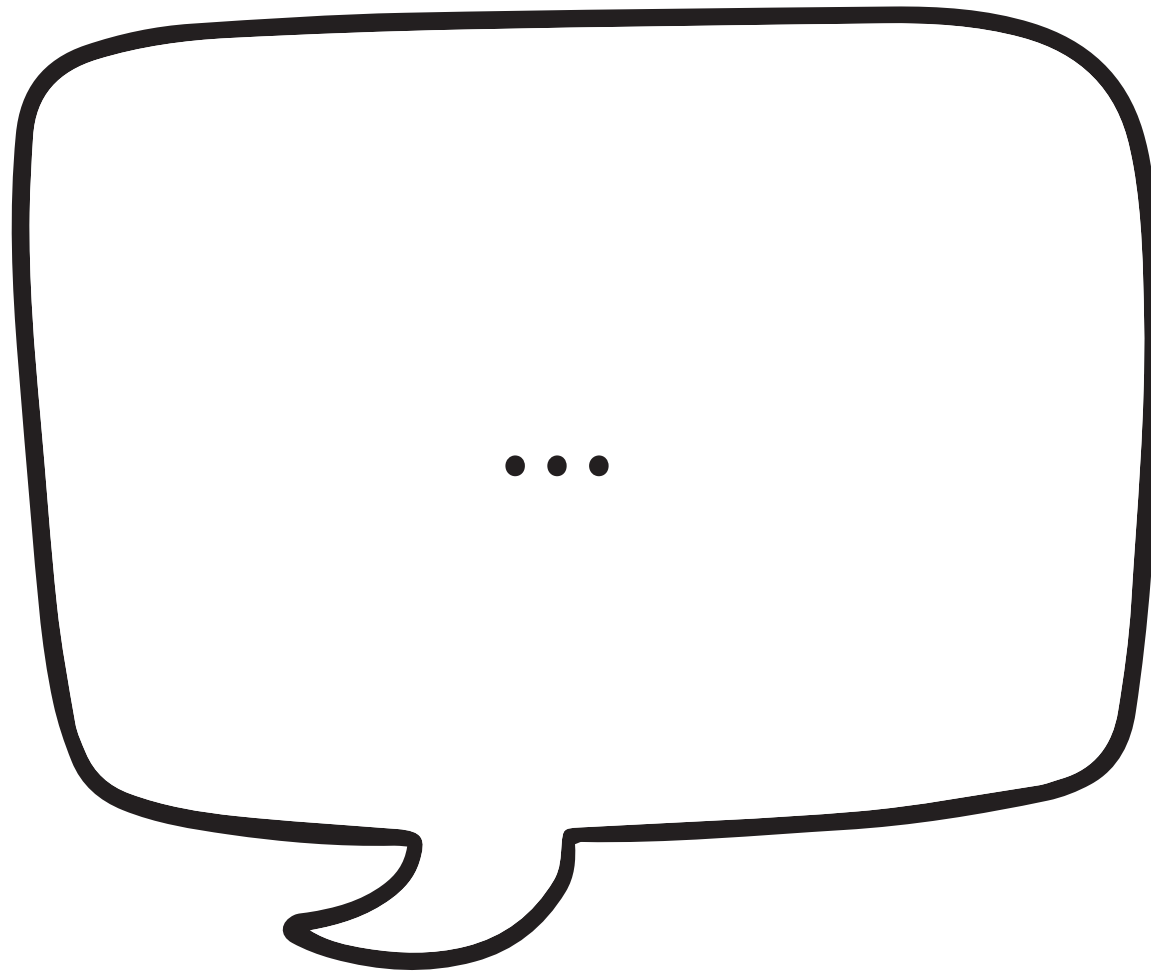
Hey, wait a
minute...

Activity 2 — Guess the question



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

Silence is golden...



Neutral probes



Yes, I see.



Uh huh.

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...?



Can you tell me why
you reacted that way?

Variation probes



How has your approach changed over time?

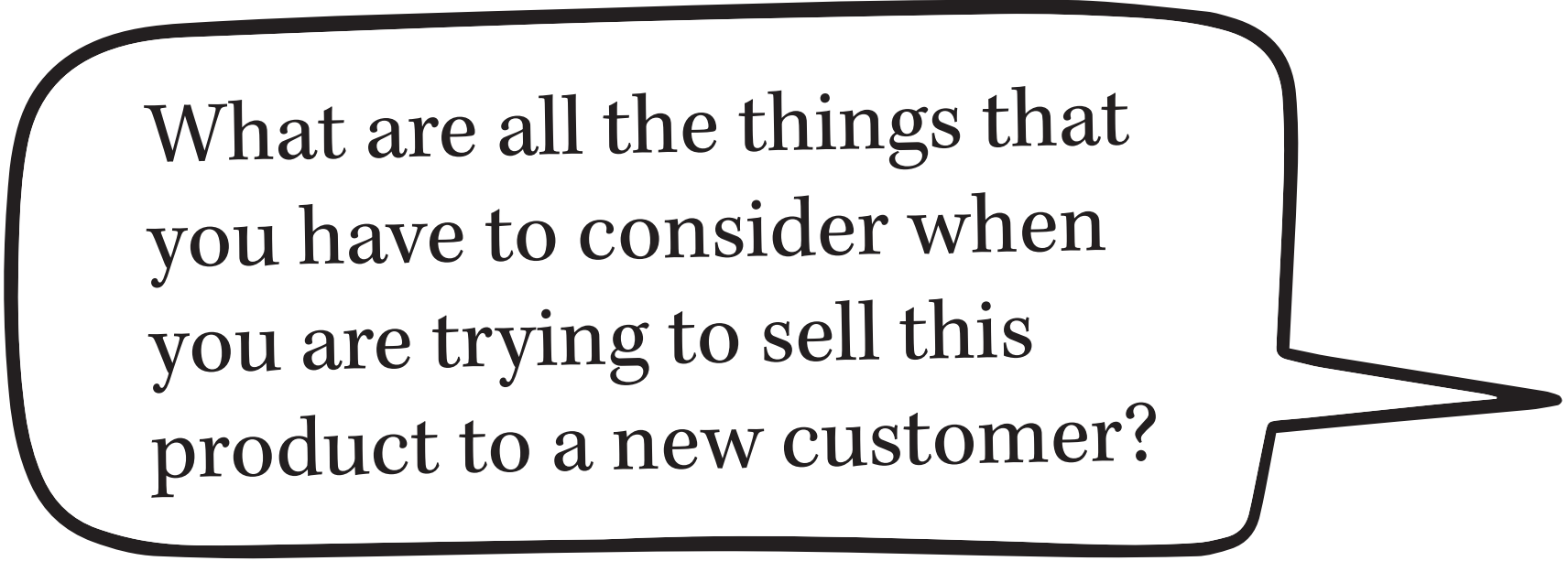
Do you always perform the task this way?

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

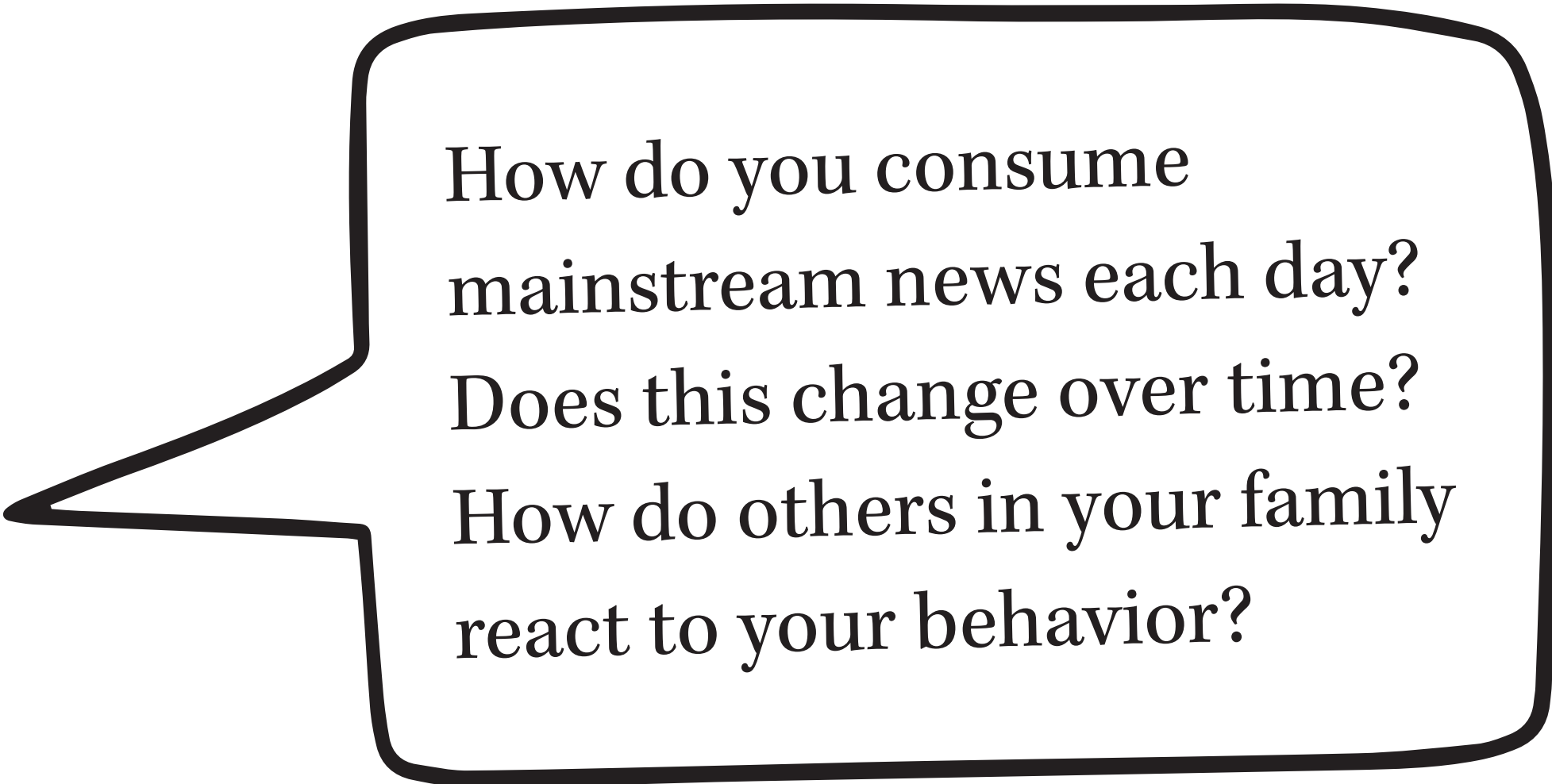
How can we make
these questions
better?

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?



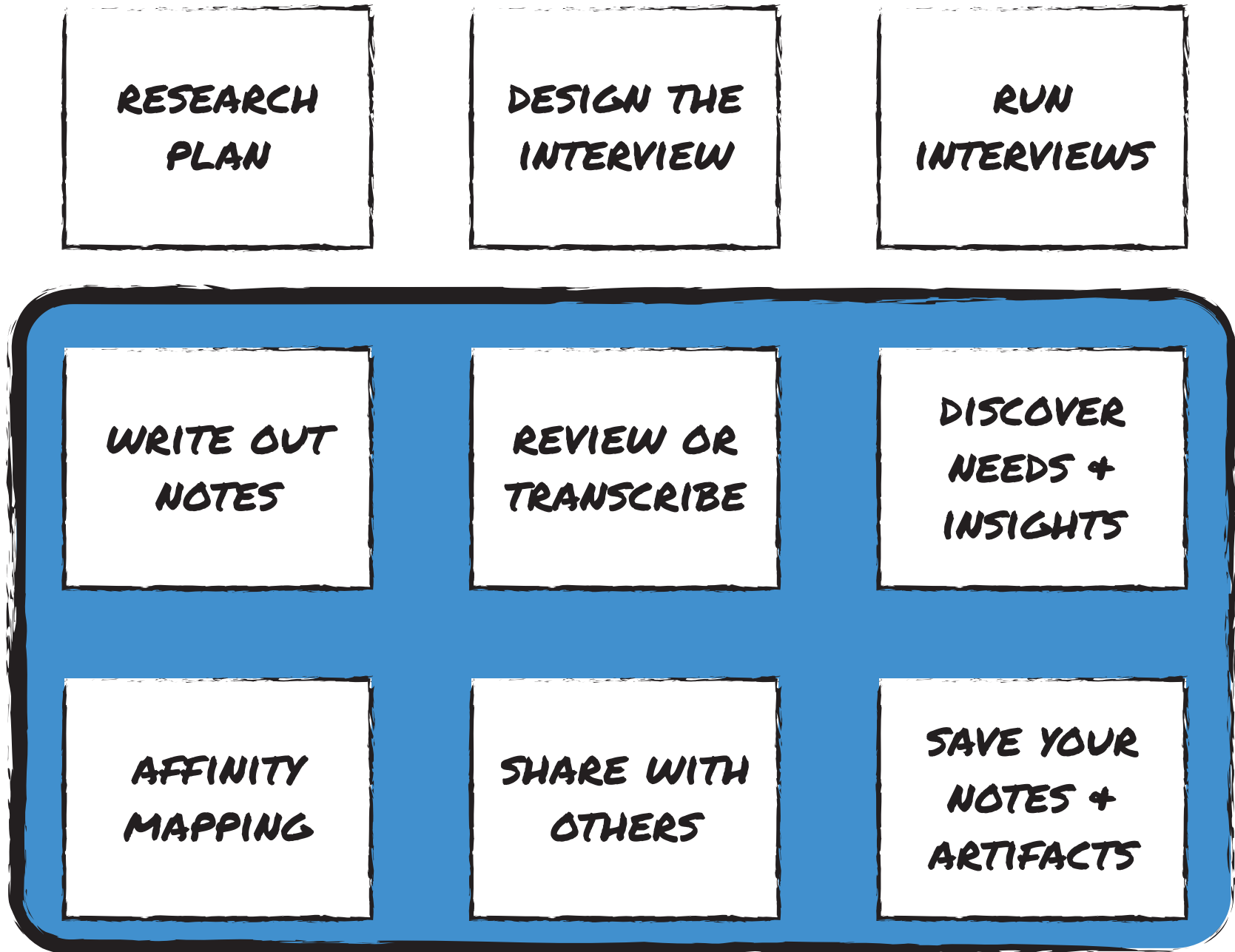
Other people I've interviewed have told me that they find grocery shopping a frustrating experience. Do you agree?

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

github.com/zeitSPACE/interviewing-session

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

Thank you!

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