



How to Do a Good Interview

Before the interview

- take two pens, bring a good notebook, one that is easy to write on
- remember to read over list of interview questions and bring it with you

As you begin

- say how much time it will take
- briefly describe topics to be covered
- let people know that choosing not to participate will not effect services
- let interviewee know you are taking notes and that you may need to ask them to slow down

Asking questions

- make eye contact whenever possible, especially when you are asking the question
- acknowledge what people are saying with nods or smiles, or by saying “okay, mm, hmm” etc.
- know the questions well enough to follow people if they jump around from question to question - let the conversation flow naturally
- don't worry about silences - wait for people to decide what to say or tell you that they need clarification of the question. Often what comes after a silence is important.
- don't push people if they don't want to discuss a certain topic. Try to find out why they don't want to discuss it. Ensure them that it is okay. to “pass” on a question.

Probing

- base your probes on your notes - try to use the interviewee's language
- encourage people to describe their own experiences specifically rather than talking in generalities. Ask things like: “Can you tell me a bit more about the

last time you experienced that or felt that way?” “Can you give me a specific example of that?”

- encourage people to talk about themselves rather than other people or people in general. Say things like “do you personally feel that way? Is that something you have experienced?”
- ask people “why do you feel that way?”
- use probes where possible to gently remind people of the focus of the interview or get them back on track.
- if you feel a person is uncomfortable, ask them. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification or repeats
- interviews are different from conversations - sharing your own thoughts is okay, but your main purpose is to get respondents’ stories
- thank people for their time and their information. Remember it is an honour to hear someone’s story!

Confidentiality

- be aware of what will be done with the data and how its confidentiality will be safeguarded
- explain to interviewees how your data will be identified (by number)
- emphasize to interviewees their freedom to refuse to answer any questions they find uncomfortable
- consider beforehand how you will deal with any unexpected negative effects (e.g., a respondent becoming distraught because of a misunderstanding about the purpose of the meeting)
- explaining to interviewees that you have an obligation to report the disclosure of abuse or other illegal activities
- assure people that they can contact you afterwards if they have any questions

*For more information,
or to arrange a workshop on interviewing,
contact us!*