# TIPS FOR CONDUCTING SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS



This infographic is for undergraduate student researchers who are conducting semi-structured interviews for their qualitative research study. This is a generic guide; the specific form of interview, analysis etc. will be determined by your research question and the paradigm and methodological approach you are working in (e.g., interpretive, phenomenological).

Qualitative paradigms and designs video

**Qualitative** methodologies and methods video

**Strategies to** ensure trustworthiness (quality) video

Qualitative <u>data analysis</u> video (focus on thematic analysis)

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#### **Interview quide**

The interview guide serves as a memory tool for focusing the discussion, not a script.

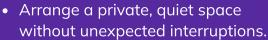
- Open-ended questions on interview guide should have a rationale behind them connected to research objectives.
- Keep phrasing of questions neutral i.e., no "can you share your thoughts on..."
- Keep the structure flexible.

### Interview guide example



followed before interview. Explain aim of interview at start. Allow for questions. up prompts to help guide the discussion. Adopt a curious, open stance in body language. Dress appropriately for context. Can you describe an interaction that you've had with a student with mental health difficulties? Who initiated contact? Think about ways to establish rapport -What was the nature of the contact? small talk at beginning is a good start! Could you describe the nature of the difficulty the student seemed to be having? Show that you are listening What signs/symptoms did they present? empathetically. Why do you think this occurred? • Good interviews = rapport + active What actions did you take with or for the student to assist them? listening + eliciting information. See key Did the student come with any specific techniques for eliciting information below. requests? • Know your interview guide and prompts How equipped or prepared did you feel to assist the student? well...but don't stick rigidly to the order. Were there aspects you found Keep note taking to a minimum to particularly challenging? maintain focus on interviewee. What helped you? Remember that the interviewer is not a Encouraging prompts Be aware of the potential for social desirability bias. • Be aware of drifting into educating or Slow nods counselling, or giving own opinions. Reflect on power dynamics. Head tilting "Hmmm" or "uh huh" Interviews with peers "Yes" or "I see" or "Okay..." Be aware of... Echo last words of participant's response Shared language and assumptions can be both advantageous and problematic. Don't rush to fill pauses with more questions • There is less room for misinterpretation but researchers could make Allow interested silences to encourage more of the participant's thought unwarranted assumptions and not question underlying ideas or meanings. Show engagement with eye contact (but • Being 'equals' means there may be more be aware of cultural norms) trust and opening up, but there may be Maintain a warm, conversational tone over-involvement and identification. Peers may feel their knowledge is being Pay attention to participant's body language tested and feel vulnerable. Be reflexive about the pre-existing relationship and perceptions.

#### Preparation and setting



- Organise the space to make participant feel comfortable; preferably don't have a desk between you.
- Aim for between 30-60 minutes, depending on topic/questions.
- Familiarise yourself with your interview guide. Practice with friends beforehand!
- Check digital recorder is working and fully charged; take back-up batteries.

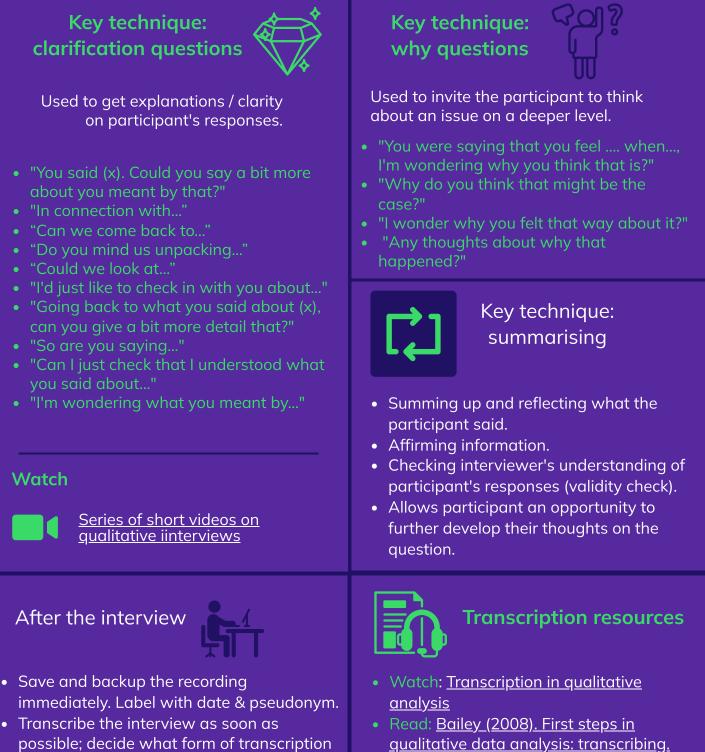


- NB: Informed consent process must be

#### Key technique: exploratory questions

- "Can you tell me a bit more about that?"
- "Could you give me an example?"
- Asking for detail about who, where, what, when, how.
- "Is there anything else you'd like to add to that?"
- "What are your thoughts about...'
- "Can we focus on that for a bit?"
- "What was that experience like for you?"
- "How do/did you feel about that?"

Key technique:



Also called "probes" or probing questions, their purpose is to ask for further



- you will use (verbatim most common).  $\longrightarrow$  1 hour of audio = +/- 4-8 hours of transcribing.
- Begin analysis after first interview (iterative data collection and analysis).
- Family Practice. • Use: Manual on transcription: transcription conventions, software guides, and practical hints for qualitative <u>researchers</u>

#### Sources

- Britten, N. (2013). Qualitative interviews. In C. Pope and N. Mays (Eds.). Qualitative research in health care, pp. 12-20.
- Holloway, I. & Galvin, K. (2017). Qualitative research in nursing and health care.
- Moerman, G. Interviewing. YouTube: Research Methods and Statistics. University of Amsterdam

## Further reading

- <u>McGrath et al (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research</u> interviews. Medical Teacher.
- Roller (2022). The in-depth interview method: 12 articles on design and implementation. Research Design Review.
- <u>Ryan (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: the one-to-one</u> interview. International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation.

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