

Field Research: Conducting an Interview

Strategies and suggestions

This presentation will cover :

Steps to Conduct an Interview



1. Setting up the Interview

Set-up Etiquette: Setting the tone starts before the interview begins. Thoughtful preparation builds trust and encourages participation.

1. Contact the potential interviewee

2. Explain who you are, your research purpose, and why you're inviting them.

3. Clarify the format: in-person, video call, chat, or email interview.

4. Present the topic you will be discussing.

5. Arrange a specific time and place.

6. Let the interviewee know how much time it will take.

7. Share the date, time, location or link, and contact info.

8. Include any prep instructions, such as reviewing a consent form.

2. *Preparing for the Interview*

Before the Interview:

1

- **Decide your goals.**
 - Ask yourself what you want to learn from the interview.

2

- **Research your interviewee.**
 - Gather background information to ask relevant and thoughtful questions.

3

- **Prepare you questions.**
 - Write a list based on your goals and research.

4

- **Prioritize your list.**
 - Ask the most important or time-sensitive questions first in case time runs out.

A. *Writing Your Questions*

Steps to consider	Description
1. Start with a clear purpose	Make a list of the key things you want to learn from the interview.
2. Develop open-ended questions	Write questions that invite the interviewee to reflect, explain, or describe their experiences in detail.
3. Avoid leading or biased questions	Don't suggest an answer in your question. Let the interviewee speak freely and form their own responses.
3. Review your language for sensitivity	Check whether any terms, assumptions, or phrasing might come off as offensive or inappropriate.
4. Watch out for problematic language	Avoid: • Stereotypes (e.g., assumptions based on gender, race, background) • Euphemisms (that may downplay serious issues) • Irony or sarcasm (which can be confusing or seem disrespectful)

B. Asking Effective Questions

- Ask **leading questions** rather than asking **yes or no questions**:
 - ✗ “Do you think there is a parking problem on campus?”
(yes or no question)
 - ✓ “What is your view about the parking situation on campus?” (leading question)
- Responses to leading questions will give you more detail to support your research.



C. Understanding Feedback

During the interview, summarize answers back to the interviewee to make sure you understand their answer.

Q: What is your view about the parking situation on campus?

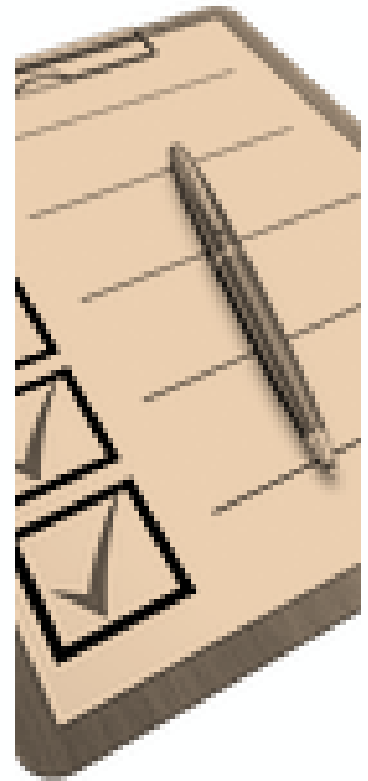
A: I think it is a problem, because there are more cars than parking spaces.

Paraphrased response:

So, you believe there are not enough parking spaces for the cars on campus?

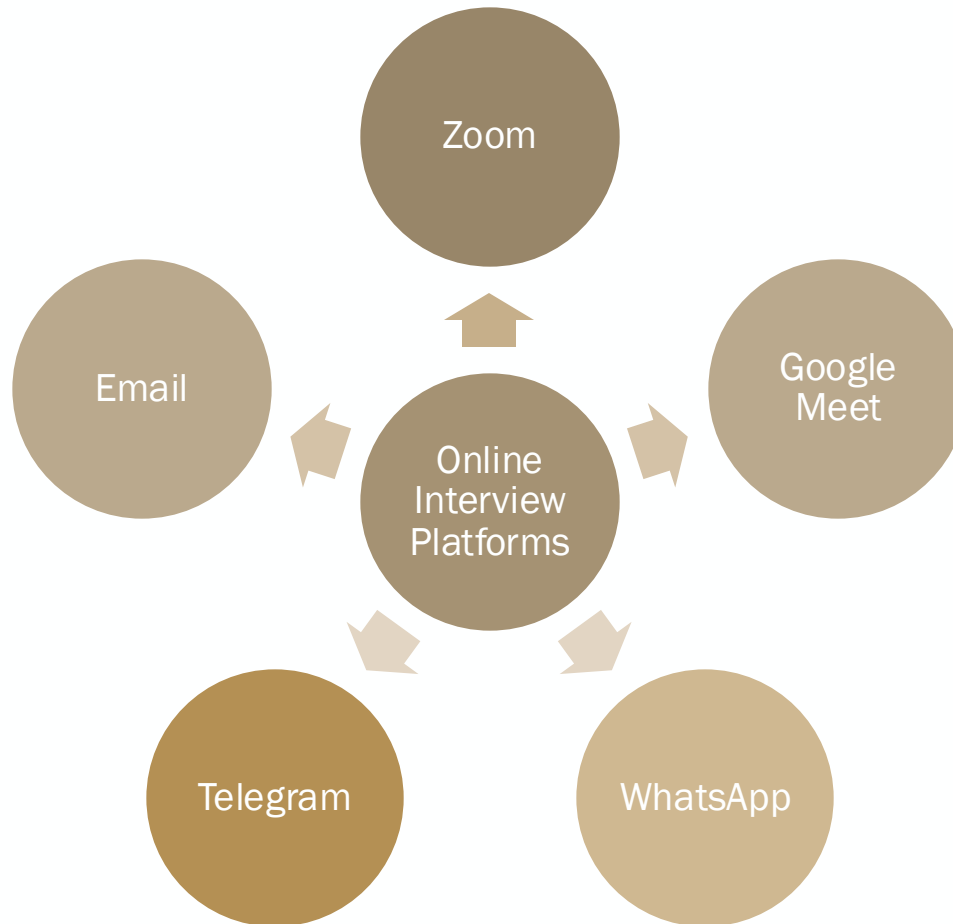
3. *Meeting the Interviewee*

- Always bring something to take notes on and several trustworthy writing instruments.
- If you wish to record your interview, *always* ask before doing so.
- Also make sure to check your technology before the interview and consider bringing a back-up recording device.
- Keep notes on the interview, but make sure that you are still talking to the interviewee, not just scribbling.
- Arrive early to get oriented, calm your nerves, and set up.
- Prepare the space and setting to feel comfortable, safe, quiet.
- Test your audio/video recorder, batteries, notepad, or backup tools.
- Review consent procedures clearly explaining the purpose of the interview
- Follow your prepared list of questions.
- Try to stick to the topic but ***be flexible*** if your interviewee brings up unexpected but valuable information.



A. *Online Interviewing*

- Online interviews can take place across multiple platforms



B. Online Interviewing: Best Practices

Regardless of format, these best practices help ensure clear communication, ethical engagement, and reliable data collection.



1. Schedule Thoughtfully

2. Prepare and share materials

3. Build rapport and consent

4. Conduct the interview respectfully

5. Follow up and store data securely

C. Online Interviewing: Emails

Email interviews involve exchanging written questions and answers asynchronously, offering flexibility for participants in different time zones or with limited internet access.

To ensure a smooth process:

1. State the purpose and format clearly in your first email.

2. Agree on a response timeline (e.g., one week)

3. Get written informed consent before starting.

4. Include a brief intro, consent info, and context with your questions.

5. Number questions and keep formatting clear.

6. Be available to clarify or follow up.

7. Confirm receipt and thank them properly.

8. Show appreciation for their time and insights.

9. Offer to share findings if appropriate.



D. Online Interviewing: Synchronous Remote Meetings

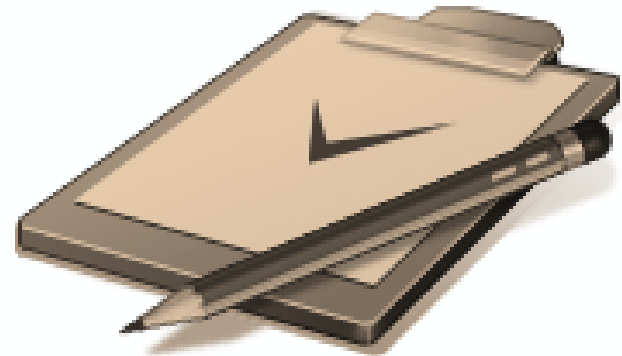
Synchronous interviews are ideal when in-person meetings aren't possible due to distance or time constraints. To ensure a smooth process, follow these preparation steps.

- **Schedule the interview** on a shared digital calendar (e.g., Google Calendar).
- **Confirm time zones** and agree on a convenient time.
- **Create and test the meeting link** (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.).
- **Share the link, date, time, and joining instructions** in advance.
- **Check your tech:** internet, camera, mic, and recording tools.
- **Choose a quiet space** with good lighting; ask the interviewee to do the same and offer help if needed.
- **Provide backup contact info** in case of technical issues.
- **Send reminders** 24 hours and 1 hour before the meeting.

4. *Conducting the Interview*

Conducting a successful interview involves attention to the following steps:

1. Making contact to setup the interview
 - Contact the participant with clear details.
 - Confirm time, format, and consent info.
2. Preparing for the interview
 - Review your questions and study goals.
 - Test your equipment and bring backups.
3. Meeting the interviewee
 - Greet warmly and review consent.
 - Build rapport and listen actively.
 - Follow your guide but stay flexible.
4. Following up on the interview
 - Thank the participant and offer updates.
 - Store data securely and reflect on key insights.



5. Following Up After the Interview

Follow-up Etiquette:

Professional and ethical follow-up strengthens trust and ensures accuracy. Regardless of format—onsite, video, chat, or email—follow these steps:

1. Always be sure to thank your interviewee, in person and in writing.
2. Write up your notes, impressions, and key insights while the interview is still fresh in your mind.
3. Organize and securely store any recordings, transcripts, or responses.
4. Let your interviewee review your findings in order to confirm that you have represented him/her accurately.
5. Respect their feedback and make corrections when necessary.
6. Keep all identifying data confidential and securely stored.
7. If you promised to share final results, send them once available.

Thank You

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