

Semi structured interviews



What is it?

An informal interview on a 1-2-1 basis around a specific topic or theme. A set of questions can be compiled in advance but there is freedom to explore the topic as the interview progresses. It is a good all round method to find out more about a particular issue/service/experience. It is a flexible method which can be created quite quickly and adapted if necessary. You can also find out about a wide range of issues in one go.



Things you need

- An interviewer and interviewee
- Consent forms
- A Dictaphone/notepad and paper
- Time – allow 30 to 60 minutes
- A quiet, private space



How to do it

1. Prepare some initial questions on the theme or topic.
2. Arrange a time and place to meet.
3. Borrow/locate a dictaphone, charge it in advance and test if it is working.
4. When conducting the interview, sit at right angles to your interviewee to avoid appearing confrontational and employ open body language. Give them plenty of eye contact. Start by explaining the research and why the interview is being conducted. If you are intending to write the research up as a journal article or conference paper, ask the participant to complete a consent form.
5. When asking questions, be brief and give the interviewee an opportunity to speak. Stay silent during their responses. Nod in agreement to give reassurance and to encourage them to elaborate on what they are saying.
6. If the interview dries up, ask questions to draw out further information.
7. If the interviewee raises an interesting point or theme that you want to explore, ask further questions.

