

Types of interviews (either one-on-one or telephone)

- Structured
 - Pre-established questions that are answered sequentially.
 - Strict guidelines on interviewer's behavior.
- Unstructured
 - Spontaneous flow of questions.
 - Questions are not pre-established.
- Semi-structured
 - Combination of structured and unstructured (e.g., a list of questions that can be asked in any order; specific wording of questions may be altered).

Types of interview questions

- Descriptive
 - (e.g., "Describe the last continuing education program you attended.").
- Structural
 - Good for understanding how the participant organizes knowledge (e.g., "When learning how to do colostomy, what do you do first? What do you do next?").
- Contrast
 - Used for understanding meaning (e.g., "What was different about this year's review course compared to other review courses you have attended?").

Advantages to using interviews

- Personal – the interviewer can interact with the participants (allows for follow-up questions, participants can ask for clarification regarding a question).
- Rich, in-depth data can be obtained.

Disadvantages to using interviews

- Time consuming
 - Soliciting participation
 - Setting up the appointments for the interviews
 - Conducting the interviews
 - Transcribing the tape recordings or entering data from forms
 - Analyzing the data
- Requires interviewing skills
- Data analysis difficult
- Not anonymous
- Depending on the questions, individual interviews may be more threatening for participants, and as such, they may be less likely to reveal personally sensitive information.
- Cannot sample as many participants as mailed or online questionnaires.
- Interviewer can influence the participants' responses.

When to use interviews

- To gain preliminary information
- Want to gain in-depth insight into someone's perspective
- Follow up on questionnaire results

Things to consider when conducting interviews

- Have a clear understanding regarding the purpose of the interview.
- Pilot test the interview questions.
- Interviewer needs to establish credibility as being knowledgeable about the subject for discussion.
- Choose appropriate setting and time for conducting the interview.
- Have a list of questions and topics to be covered during the interview.
- Practice active listening by repeating, paraphrasing, or summarizing what the participant has stated.
- At the end of the interview ask participants if they can be contacted again for further information or for points of clarification. Also provide the participants with a way to contact the interviewer.
- Before the interview, make contact with the participants in writing and inform them of the type of questions that will be asked. Additionally, if there are questions that may be difficult for participants to answer on the spot, send them out ahead of time.
- At the start of the interview
 - Reintroduce the topic and the purpose.
 - Provide a general sense of how the information obtained from the interview will be used.