# **DISCOVER**

# **1.2 QUALITATIVE METHODS**



# **Interviews**

Engage in deep conversations to uncover rich insights.

## How-to

- 1 Before an interview, conduct desk research and structure an interview guide to outline the objectives of the interview.
- Identify who you would like to interview and ensure that they are representative of your target user group.
- 3 Allocate at least 45 minutes to two hours for the interview, to ensure ample time for building rapport and fostering a comfortable, safe environment for open conversation.
- 4 Use open-ended questions to encourage interviewees to share their experiences and perspectives in detail. Allow interviewees to lead the conversation.
- Seek consent for any form of recording and explain how the information will be used.
- 6 Identify and analyse patterns and trends such as the user's emotions, behaviours and motivations.

  These will give you a deeper appreciation of the user's challenges and circumstances.
- 7 Consider creating personas and journey maps (refer to Chapter 2) to consolidate research findings and help the team focus on key user insights.



Asking good questions in an interview gets us the insights we need to build better solutions.

- Keep your questions concise: Limit them to fewer than 10 words to avoid overwhelming interviewees.
- Pose open-ended questions: Refrain from asking "Yes/No" questions. Instead, craft questions that invite conversation and storytelling (for example, "Can you tell me about a time when...").
- Maintain neutrality in questioning: Avoid leading questions. For example, "What do you think about this idea?" is preferable to "Don't you think this idea is great?" as it does not imply that there is a correct answer.
- Ask why: Even if the reason seems obvious, ask why someone said or did something. Their response may reveal unexpected insights.
- Refrain from suggesting answers: Resist the urge to prompt interviewees with potential responses, even if they hesitate. Suggesting answers can bias responses and limit their authenticity.
- Focus on familiar topics: Encourage discussion about topics your interviewees are knowledgeable about. People are more comfortable discussing their own experiences, whereas discussing unfamiliar issues can be challenging.

Besides asking good questions, these best practices can help you make the most of interviews:

- Consider conducting interviews in pairs: It can be challenging to engage with interviewees while also taking notes. If possible, conduct interviews with a partner. If that isn't feasible, record the interview and jot down key takeaways to complement the recording.
- Embrace moments of silence: It's natural to feel compelled to fill pauses in conversation, as silence can be uncomfortable. However, allowing brief periods of silence can provide space for interviewees to reflect and share deeper insights.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues: Be attuned to your interviewee's body language and emotions. Take note of any comments that elicit strong emotional responses from them.
- *Identify inconsistencies*: Sometimes, there may be discrepancies between what people say and what they do. These inconsistencies can offer valuable insights. Consider exploring these discrepancies further in a respectful manner.

Interview notes can be broken down into the following:

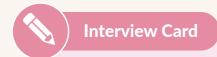
- Interviewee's perspectives: This can include their preferences, motivations, beliefs and values; how they describe the situation or context; and how they describe certain episodes or experiences.
- Facts/data: This refers to factual information shared by the interviewee.
- Interviewer's observations: These can include the interviewee's emotions, expressions and tone; gestures and body language; and the interviewee's home or surroundings.
- Interviewer's inferences: These are things you perceive that are not explicitly expressed by the interviewee.

\*This interview guide is adapted from the School of X's Fieldwork Notebook.

Use this template to list and define the users and stakeholders your team would like to focus on for your field research.

Characteristics*	Example (Mr Lim)	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	Stakeholder 4	Stakeholder 5	Stakeholder 6
Age	70						
Gender	Male						
Profession	Cleaner at a coffeeshop						
Socio-economic background	Monthly gross income of <\$1,600						
Living arrangement	Staying alone in a 2-room flat, 2 children are married and live separately from him, do not visit him often						
Ailment/disabilities	Rheumatism, hard of hearing						
Others (Language spoken, technology literacy, education level etc.)	<ul> <li>Mainly Mandarin, Hokkien and Teochew</li> <li>Not tech-savvy, able to use simple mobile phone features</li> <li>Did not complete primary school education</li> </ul>						

 $<sup>{}^*\</sup>textit{Please change the characteristics listed to attributes that better align with the scope of your project.}$ 



Use this template to structure your interviews.

Person	Interview Guide
	Introduction
	<ul><li>Introduce yourself</li><li>Explain what this interview is for and how the information will be used</li></ul>
Demographic	<ul> <li>Assure the interviewee of confidentiality and obtain his/her consent to proceed</li> </ul>
Age	Rapport-building conversation starters  •
Gender	•
Profession	•
Type of accommodation	
Any caregivers	Guiding questions 1.
Tech savviness	2.
Any other attributes that are relevant	3.
*Please modify the above attributes to focus on what is relevant for your user group	4.
and challenge topic.	5.
	<ul> <li>Ending an interview</li> <li>Ask for any additional feedback or comments</li> <li>Reaffirm confidentiality</li> <li>Thank the interviewee for his/her time</li> </ul>



Project Title and Objectives	Researcher's Name	Organisation		
1. I confirm that I have read and understoo	od the project's objectives and have had	the opportunity to ask questions.		
<ol><li>I understand that my participation in the explanation.</li></ol>	is research study is voluntary and I am fro	ee to withdraw at any time without		
<ol><li>I understand that any of my comments confidential, and if used, may be edited</li></ol>		ing the study will be held strictly		
<b>4.</b> I authorise the use of photographic, audio and/or video recording during my participation, as well as the subsequent digitalisation of these materials, to support and complement the information gathered throughout my involvement.				
5. I understand that I can ask for any of my recorded research data at any time with		ed, amended or removed from the		
<ol><li>I understand that my comments and inf audio, photo, video, paper and/or electr</li></ol>	ormation may be shared within the proje onic, in order to meet the objectives of t			
7. I agree to participate in the above study. Or if the person is under 18, I certify that I am his/her parent/legal guardian and I give my consent to the above on his/her behalf. I affirm with my signature that I am at least 18 years of age.				

This consent form is adapted from the School of X's Fieldwork Notebook.

Full name of participant / representative: \_

Signature of participant / representative:



# **Field Ethnography**

Observe and document behaviours, interactions and practices through field ethnography — a research method used to study people in their natural environments — for nuanced insights that inform design and innovation.

## How-to

- Identify the key objectives and inquiries you intend to address using field ethnography.
- Spend time observing the community thoughtfully, actively taking in their daily routines, behaviours and social interactions.
- Occument thorough field notes, which comprise three essential components: descriptions, interpretations and reflections. These include observations, anecdotes and emerging patterns noticed during your immersion in the community.
- Summarise each key point of your research findings. Discuss your findings with your teammates.
- Look out for common themes among these key findings and group them together accordingly.
- Uncover the "Why" behind your observations to generate insights. Validate these with domain experts or other relevant stakeholders.
- Use an empathy map a visual tool to understand and represent user insights to put yourself in others' shoes by taking note of what they see, hear, say, do, think and feel.



Here are some tips for writing useful field notes:

- Aim for accuracy: Each observation presents a unique opportunity; refine your note-taking skills to quickly and accurately capture moments in time.
- Stay organised: Plan ahead for documenting your observations. Disorganised notes will make it harder to interpret data.
- Be descriptive: Record ample factual evidence to prevent assumptions about your observations.
- Focus on the research problem: Prioritise detailing aspects relevant to the research problem; avoid cluttering your notes with extraneous information.
- Capture insights and thoughts: Reflect on the significance of your observations and record corresponding thoughts and ideas. This will help you ask questions or seek clarification from participants after the observations.



Use this template to record detailed, factual observations of people, environments and events. Refrain from making interpretations or judgments.

**Fnd Time:** 

Location:

Start Time:

Dat	e:	Start Time:	End Time:	Location:	
	Area of focus	Observation cues	Notes		
	Activities	<ul> <li>What are people doing?</li> <li>What tasks or goals are the trying to accomplish?</li> <li>Are there any repeated actions or routines?</li> </ul>	y		
	Environment	<ul> <li>What is the physical setting</li> <li>What are the sounds, smell temperature conditions?</li> <li>How is the space arranged?</li> </ul>	s, or		
	Interactions	<ul> <li>Who is interacting with wh what?</li> <li>What are the interactions I (verbal, non-verbal, digital)?</li> <li>Are there any noticeable particle or issues?</li> </ul>	ike		
	Objects	<ul> <li>What tools, materials, or oleane being used?</li> <li>Are there any signages, scredigital interfaces?</li> <li>How are these objects bein handled or arranged?</li> </ul>	eens or		
	Users	<ul> <li>Who are the users/stakeho</li> <li>What are their characterist (age, role, mood, etc.)?</li> <li>What behaviours or workan are they engaging in?</li> </ul>	ics		

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## **Interpretations**

Use this template to note down your personal interpretations and inferences from your observations. Be mindful to distinguish between descriptions and interpretations, as the latter may be influenced by researcher bias.

#### **Observation summary**

Briefly describe what you have observed.

Example: During a group activity at an active ageing centre, an elderly man sat apart from the group. He occasionally looked over but did not join in, even when a staff member invited him. He fidgeted with his hands and stared at the floor.

Your notes:

### Interpretation

What do you think the observed person was thinking, feeling or intending?

Example: He might have been feeling isolated or uncomfortable in a group setting. Perhaps he didn't feel like he belonged, or the activity wasn't suited to his interests or energy levels.

Your notes:

#### **Underlying assumptions**

What personal biases or assumptions might be influencing your interpretations?

Example: I'm assuming that his withdrawal indicated loneliness or disinterest, possibly because I associate physical separation with emotional distance. I may also be projecting my own discomfort in unfamiliar group settings onto him.

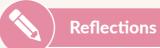
Your notes:

#### Alternative explanations

What other interpretations could there be?

Example: It's possible that he has hearing difficulties and couldn't follow the conversation. He could have been tired or unwell that day. It's also possible he enjoys observing rather than participating.

Your notes:



Use this template to reflect on your fieldwork observations and interpretations. This segment helps you connect insights to broader contexts, surface important questions and think critically about the implications of your findings.

## Key insights

What are the most important takeaways from your observation and interpretation?

Example: One participant consistently sat apart from the group during activities and did not engage despite gentle encouragement from staff.

Your notes:

# **Emerging patterns or themes**

Are these behaviours, needs or challenges consistent across your observations?

Example: This behaviour may point to emotional withdrawal, sensory overload, or a mismatch between the activity and the individual's interests or abilities. Others in the room appeared similarly disengaged when activities were fast-paced or unfamiliar.

Your notes:

#### **Questions or concerns**

What are you wondering about? What needs further exploration or clarification?

Example: Are group activities meeting the emotional and cognitive needs of all participants? How might individual preferences or mental health conditions affect group dynamics?

Your notes:

#### **Relevance and implications**

Why do these matter? How might they impact your work, design, or next steps?

Example: This suggests a need to balance structured group activities with activities that individuals can do on their own. It raises the importance of personalisation in activity planning, particularly for those who may be living with dementia, social anxiety, or grief. Observing who participates — and who doesn't — can reveal gaps in inclusivity and engagement strategies.

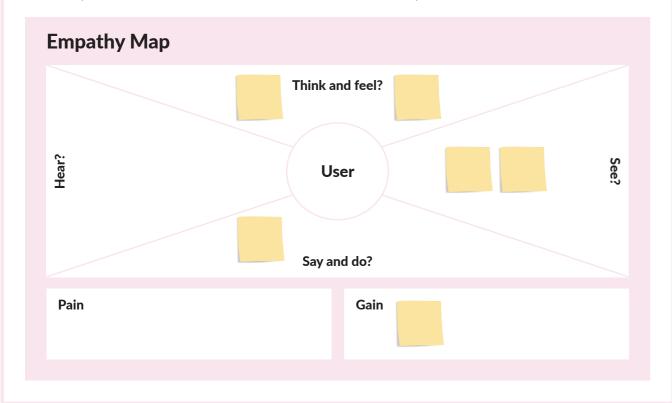
Your notes:



## Empathy Map

An empathy map helps to develop a deeper understanding of users' needs, thoughts and feelings, for more emotionally connected and effective solutions.

Do note that people tend to act differently when they know they are being observed. To minimise this tendency, field observations should be done in an unobtrusive way.





# **Service Safari**

Step into the shoes of your users to understand their thoughts and concerns.

# How-to

- Identify the experience you want to examine, such as a product, process or service that involves user interaction.
- Engage with the service as if you are experiencing it for the first time. Take notes and focus on interactions, emotions and any pain points.
- Record your observations in real time using notes, photos or sketches to capture the nuances of the user experience.
- Pay special attention to any workarounds or improvisations that users employ to navigate challenges. These insights are key to identifying areas of improvement.
- 5 Bring your insights to life by crafting a journey map (refer to Chapter 2). This could be a chronological representation of the user's experience, highlighting touchpoints, challenges and positive moments.



# Shadowing

Observe individuals unobtrusively to uncover objective behavioural insights.

### How-to

- 1 Shadowing is typically done after user interviews and general observations. Define your research objectives to stay focused, but keep an open mind to avoid having too narrow a perspective.
- Obtain the necessary permissions and consent. Ensure participants are comfortable with the process.
- While shadowing, avoid interaction to maintain the natural flow of activities. Minimise the observer's presence and save questions till after you are done shadowing.
- 4 Take detailed notes, photos or videos to capture key moments and insights during the shadowing session, in a systematic and structured manner.
- After the session, analyse your findings. Are there any observations that differ from your interview responses? Consolidate and document your findings.



# **Journals**

Gain insights into users' behaviours, motivations and attitudes through journal entries about their experiences.

### How-to

- Design a semi-structured journal that provides clear parameters of what to record and the frequency and format of recording.
- 2 Ensure that users record their journal entries in the template provided and emphasise the importance of consistency in their recordings.
- 3 Regularly gather and review users' entries during the study period. Offer opportunities for users to seek clarification or pose questions.
- Systematically analyse the journal entries. Identify any patterns, trends and notable insights.
- 5 Synthesise the key findings. These insights will subsequently inform your Develop phase and guide you in creating solutions that align with the users' needs and behaviour.

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