



Conducting an Interview with Empathy

Preparing for an Interview

To make the most out of your interviews, you should sufficiently prepare your team before each one. Having a plan for your interview will make it much more smoother and make sure you cover all the important areas in one sitting.

Use these steps to help you prepare and plan for an interview:

- 1 | Brainstorm with your team the questions you can ask. To maximise the spread of potential questions, remember to build on one another's ideas.
- 2 | After the brainstorming session, group the potential questions into areas or themes. After you have identified all the themes your questions belong to, try to figure out the best order of themes that would ensure a smooth flow of conversation. Are there themes that are slightly more probing? Then put them towards the middle of the interview. Additionally, if one theme builds on another, it would be good for them to follow one after another.
- 3 | The last step to preparing your interview is to polish the questions. Remove repeated questions, and consolidate or separate questions where necessary. Make sure your questions allow you to tap into the emotions of your interviewee.



Conducting an Interview

Here are some tips you can use when conducting your interviews with users:

- Ask why, even if you think you know the answer. Don't assume to know what users are thinking or feeling — sometimes, their answer might surprise you.
- Ask for anecdotes. When asking users about their experiences, try to tease out stories of what they did in the recent past, rather than asking about generic experiences. For example, ask them about the last time they used a recipe app, instead of asking about their experience with recipe apps in general.
- Observe for body language — they often tell us more than what was spoken!
- Don't lead the question. When asking a question, frame it to be as neutral as possible. Rather than asking "Do you think it's very troublesome to find recipes?", try "What do you think of the process of finding recipes?" instead.
- Have an interview partner. It's impossible to take notes while listening to what your interviewee is saying at the same time. If you can't find a partner, use an audio recording app while you interview so you can be focused on following up and asking questions.

STARTER QUESTIONS FOR USER RESEARCH

A collection of questions to ask during your customer development and user research interviews.

CREATED BY SARAH DOODY

WHY RESEARCH MATTERS

Whether you work at a large company or a startup, one huge key to success is that you must talk to your customers.

Without talking to users you risk the expensive mistake of creating something they don't want.

Data and analytics can only tell you the "what".

But research and talking to people allows you to dig deep and understand the "why" behind their behavior.

In the pages that follow you will find sample questions to help you start doing your own customer development and user research interviews.

Enjoy!

STARTER QUESTIONS FOR USER RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

The following is a list of questions that you can use throughout the customer and product development process. Asking open ended questions is critical to keeping the conversation going and creating opportunity for the person to tell you stories about their life that could lead you to critical insights and ideas.

A few tips to keep in mind:

- Don't try to ask all of these, prioritize based on your research goals.
- For each answer, be sure to ask "why" or "why not" to dig deeper.

1. CUSTOMER INTRO QUESTIONS

These questions are aimed to fill in any gaps about the person's day to day that may not have been answered in the participant questionnaire, screener, or survey.

- What does your typical weekday look like?
- When do you normally first use the Internet in a typical day?
- What are some of the apps and websites you use the most?
- Tell me about your role at your company?
- Any lifestyle questions that are related to your topic / product.

2. TOPIC SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

These questions are aimed to help you understand and learn about the problems that people have with the topic / problem that your product aims to solve.

- What's your relationship like with [topic ... e.g. money, fitness, etc]
- How do you currently go about [problem / task]?
- How much time do you typically spend on [problem / task]?
- Tell me about the last time you tried to [problem / task]?
- What do you like about how you currently [problem / task]?
- What is the biggest pain point related to [problem / task]?
- Why do you keep doing [problem / task] ... why is it important to you?
- What type of work arounds have you cerated to help you with this?
- What's the hardest part about [problem / task]?
- What are you currently doing to make this [problem / task] easier?
- How does this [problem / task] impact other areas of your life / work?
- What other products or tools have you tried out?
- Have you paid for any of these other products or tools?
- How did you hear about these other products or tools?
- What do you like or dislike about these other products or tools?
- Are you looking for a solution or alternative for [problem / task]?

3. PRODUCT OPPORTUNITY QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to be used if you plan to show someone a demo, feature, or prototype and get their feedback and reaction. The goal of these questions is to help validate your solution.

- What do you think of this product? (meant to be asked at the homepage to gauge initial reaction)
- Why do you think someone would use this product?
- Can you see yourself ever using this product?
- Why do you think you can trust this product?
- How do you think this product is going to help you?
- Would you use this product today?
- What might keep people from using this product?
- What's the most you would be willing to pay for this product?
- Does this remind of you any other products?

4. PRODUCT REACTION QUESTIONS

These questions are meant to help identify suggestions or ideas that the person has. Ideally these are asked after the person has used the product or you've walked them through doing a few tasks.

- What's most appealing about this product?
- What's the hardest part about using this product?
- Was there anything surprising or unexpected about this product?
- What could be done to improve this product?
- Was there anything missing from this product that you expected?
- Would you keep using this product after what you saw today?

THAT'S IT.

Did you find this resource of starter questions for user research helpful? [Click to tweet](#) and tell your colleagues about it.

Feel free to [email me](#) or reach me on Twitter [@sarahdoody](#).

Know someone who should learn more about UX?
Tell them to sign up for my weekly newsletter, *The UX Notebook*, at
this link: www.bitly.com/uxnotebook

Starter Questions For User Research

Created by:
Sarah Doody

Website:
www.sarahdoody.com

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