PARTICIPANT APPROACH

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

A qualitative research technique of conducting intensive individual interviews.

Duration	**Preparation:** 0.5 hours–4 weeks (depending on accessibility and legal regulations) **Activity:** 0.5 hours–4 weeks (depending on number and availability of interviewees and researchers) **Follow-up:** 0.5 hours–4 weeks (depending on amount of data)
Physical requirements	Notebook, photo camera, voice recorder, video camera, legal agreements (consent and/or confidentiality agreement)
Energy level	Middle
Researchers/Facilitators	Minimum 1 (a better approach is to have teams of 2–3 researchers per interview)
Participants	Minimum 5 (but aim for at least 20 per group)
Expected output	Text (transcripts, field notes), audio recordings, photos, videos, artifacts

Researchers might conduct several in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders (e.g., front- and backstage employees, customers, suppliers, etc.) or external experts to understand different perspectives on a specific subject matter. These interviews can help researchers learn more about particular expectations, experiences, products, services, goods, operations, processes, and concerns, and also about a person's attitude, problems, needs, ideas, or environment.

In-depth interviews can be conducted in a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured manner. While strictly structured interviews are rather uncommon in design, following a semi-structured guideline helps a researcher to collect useful data. The interview questions should be structured in a "funnel" manner, starting with general and broad questions to get the participant comfortable with the interview and talking and to build rapport, then gently becoming more specific and detailed on subjects related to the research question. Interview guidelines can be customized for a project or a group of interviewees or can be based on more general templates, such as an empathy map following the interview topics of "Think & Feel," "Hear," "See," "Say & Do," "Pain," and "Gain" to collect data for personas.[01] In-depth interviews are mostly done face to face so researchers can observe body language and to create a more intimate atmosphere, but can be also conducted online or by telephone.

These interviews can be supported by creating boundary objects, such as simple scribbles or mind maps as well as personas, journey maps, system maps, or other useful templates. These can be co-created with the interviewee to support a mutual understanding of rather complex issues. The tools can be paper-based, with interviewees filling out templates as part of an interview, or they can take a more tangible form, such as using game pieces or figures to visualize networks or systems. Sometimes in-depth interviews also include tasks like card sorting to understand user needs or storytelling supported by tangible touchpoint cards to visualize experiences. Touchpoint cards[02] are particularly useful for retrospective interviews of past experiences as they help interviewees to make their memories more tangible. During retrospective interviews, interviewees recap and evaluate their experience with a product, service, event, or brand. It is useful to not only capture the final result (a journey map created with touchpoint cards) but also to document the whole creation process followed by the interviewee.

01 The original empathy map included the topics of *What does the customer think & feel/see/hear/say & do?*, and sections for listing pains and gains. In 2017, *Who are we empathizing with?* and *What do they need to do?* were added to the original template. See *http://gamestorming.com/empathy-mapping/* and Gray, D., Brown, S., & Macanufo, J. (2010). *Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers*. O'Reilly.

02 Prof. Simon Clatworthy developed "touch-point cards" as part of his AT-ONE research project. See, for example, Clatworthy, S. (2011). "Service Innovation Through Touch-points: Development of an Innovation Toolkit for the First Stages of New Service Development." *International Journal of Design*, 5(2), 15-28.

A Pay attention to your interviewees' body language and gestures and write down interesting observations. This often leads to further questions.

B Using touchpoint cards or a journey map as a boundary object during an in-depth interview helps interviewees to recap experiences.

Step-by-step guide

1 Define specific research question
Specify your research question or a set of questions based on the type of research (exploratory vs. confirmatory research), what you want to do with your findings (personas, journey maps, system maps, etc.), and what sample size you'll probably need.

2 Identify interviewees
Based on your research question, define criteria for selecting suitable interviewees. Use sampling techniques to select your interviewees and consider including internal experts or external agencies for interviewee recruitment.

3 Plan and prepare
Plan how to approach your interviewee. What expectations will you set in advance, how will you start, where and when will you conduct the interview, will you include any tasks for the interviewee, how will you end, and how much time do you plan for the interview? Consider that the environment – when and where you do the interview – could have an impact on the interview itself. Write up interview guidelines based on what you want to find out and what kind of experience you want to give your interviewee. The guidelines should be semi-structured, so that they help you not to forget anything during the interview, but give you the flexibility to change your agenda if useful. Also consider who you want to include as interviewers from the client side or from other departments involved in the project. Agree on how you'll document the interviews and set up legal agreements if necessary to take voice recordings, photos, or videos.

4 Conduct interviews
During the interview, ask open and non-leading questions. Consider using specific interview techniques, such as the Five Whys, to reveal underlying motivations. Agree up front on the roles within your interviewer team; establish beforehand who will ask questions and who will observe and take notes. The length of in-depth interviews varies with the research objective, anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours.

5 Follow-up
Write up your individual key learnings right after the interview and compare them within your team. Keep track of all your documentation (e.g., by indexing your field notes, transcripts, photos, audio and video recordings, and collected artifacts) and highlight important passages. For each interview, write a short summary that includes your conflated key findings as well as raw data to exemplify these, such as quotes, photos, or videos. Don't forget to link the summary to your interview data (that's where indexing comes in very handy).

Method notes

→ In-depth interviews can apply techniques like the Five Whys to gain more depth and learn more about the underlying motivations.

→ If possible, document interviews with video or audio recordings and photographs so that you collect raw (first-level construct) data. In this context, pay attention to the interviewee's mood, and observe gestures and body language. ◂