

TIPS for Writing up your Interview Notes
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Preparing for the interview

1. Set a date and time for the interview. The earlier you do this the better.
2. Prepare a draft I-Guide before meeting with the respondent. Include possible follow-up probes.
3. Consult the *Interviewing Tips* and *Tips for Taping Interviews* on the [Tips and Tools](#) webpage.
4. Having followed the steps for preparing for an interview, pre-test it with a colleague for the clarity of the questions and flow of the interview.
5. Remember, the objective of this interview is for you to learn about the respondent in order to answer your research question(s). Identify the key areas of information you require. Keep your questions open rather than specific. For example, if you are conducting research to examine peoples' interests, instead of listing the possible interests of the respondent, simply ask "What are your current interests?" You are trying to learn as much as you can about the respondent and his/her current and past interests; you are not there to showoff your knowledge about those interests. On the other hand, be sure to include any interests that you wish to check about (for comparative purposes) in your list of probe questions.

Immediately after the interview

6. If you took notes in a short-hand format during the interview, the first thing you must do is to expand your notes and write them up in full sentences. Do this immediately after the interview otherwise you will forget the details.
7. If you taped the interview, immediately check to see that the tape worked and that you can hear all the responses. If not, write up notes immediately, trying to recall everything that was said.

Format for writing up the interview notes

8. Begin with an Identification Block (ID-Block). This should include:
 - Respondent's name or Identification #
 - Location and circumstances of the interview (e.g., others present, noise levels, private or public space?)
 - Date & Time of the interview (including start and end time)
 - Focus (or strategy of the interview)
 - Key Demographic information (if useful e.g., gender, age, degrees, etc)
 - Interviewer's Name
9. Clearly differentiate the interviewer's words from those of the respondent. The most efficient way to do this is to put the Interviewer's words in *italics* and to leave the respondent's words in ordinary text or use I: and R: to distinguish the text. Colour coding is fine but it is more expensive to print hard copies if they are needed. (Note: Keep in mind that these conventions vary depending on the software program adopted to do the analysis. If you have many interviews to analyze and plan to use such a program (e.g., NUD*IST, NVIVO); check out the requirements of the program before hand.)
10. *Always* record the respondent's answers in her/his own words. Quotation marks are not necessary.
11. Any analytic or descriptive notes that you wish to add must be clearly differentiated from each other and from the words of the Interviewer and the Respondent.