

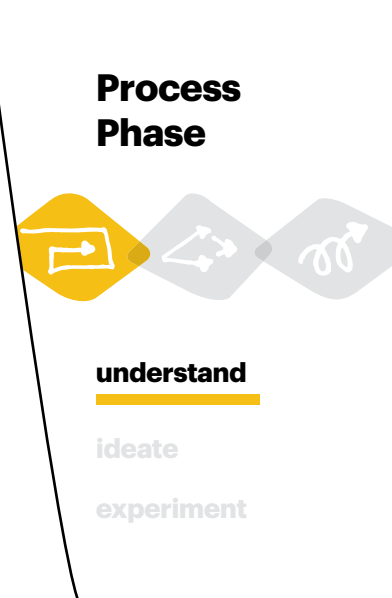
## Field Observations

### Active Listening - Interviewing for Empathy

Engaging with people directly reveals a tremendous amount about the way they think and the values they hold. If we are to design and build for our customers we need to understand their thoughts, emotions, and motivations. By understanding the choices that person makes and the behaviors that person engages in, we can identify their needs, and design to better meet those needs.

#### How to Interview for Empathy

- 1** Before you begin make sure you are prepared to capture. If possible always interview in pairs. If this is not feasible, you should use a voice or video recorder—it is impossible to properly engage a user and take detailed notes at the same time
- 2** Use the [Interview Question Worksheet](#) to help you develop a variety of questions to ask. Review the [Interview Question Framing](#) document to learn what kind of questions to ask. It's important to ask the right kind of questions – ones that begin honest dialogue, build connections, and yield different perspectives.
- 3** During the interview follow the best practice examples outlined in [Interview Best Practices](#). Remember to remain curious and open minded. Listen intently before you move to the next question. Thoughtful questioning is not about looking for answers, but trying to understand issues from multiple points of view.
- 4** Finally look for inconsistencies and pay attention to nonverbal cues. Sometimes what people say and what they do are different. These inconsistencies often hide interesting insights. Be aware of body language and emotions and record any additional observations.



**Time**  
30 minutes prep

**Level**  
Moderate

**Materials**  
Interview partner or recording device, Interview Question Worksheet, Interview Best Practices, Interview Question Framing



Interviewing for empathy allows us to understand a person's thoughts, emotions and motivations.

## Interview Question Framing



Different questions provide different types of information. It's important to frame questions to get the information you want.

### Use closed questions to understand the context

Closed questions usually call for a specific answer and help to verify evidence and assess situations and problems that already exist.

Ask questions such as:

- What happened?
- What are the problems?
- When do problems usually occur?
- What works? What resources exist?

### Use open-ended questions to encourage self-reflection and understand assumptions

Open-ended questions encourage people to think more about why things occur the way they do. These questions begin a process of analysis that may lead to a discussion of how things might be different.

Ask questions such as:

- Why did this happen?
- How would you solve this problem?
- What might be done instead?

### Use clarifying questions to further explore related issues

Questions that ask people to describe or explain their initial responses can encourage them to share their opinions and ideas.

Ask questions such as:

- 
- 

## Interview Question Worksheet

Create questions by choosing a word from the left column and a word from the top row. Your questions will be more complex and represent more complex thinking when you move towards the right.

Simple Questions

	IS	DID	CAN	WILL	WOULD
WHO	Who is _____	Who did _____	Who can _____	Who will _____	Who would _____
WHAT	What is _____	What did _____	What can _____	What will _____	What would _____
WHERE	Where is _____	Where did _____	Where can _____	Where will _____	Where would _____
WHEN	When is _____	When did _____	When can _____	When will _____	When would _____
WHY	Why is _____	Why did _____	Why can _____	Why will _____	Why would _____
HOW	How is _____	How did _____	How can _____	How will _____	How would _____

## Interview Best Practices



At Sprint we interview for empathy because we want to understand a person's thoughts, emotions and motivations. By understanding the choices that person makes and the behaviors that person engages in, we can identify their needs, and design to meet those needs. To ensure your interview is focused on empathy be sure to follow the best practices listed below.

### Do

**Do ask neutral questions.** "What do you think about ...?" is a better question than "Don't you think ...?" because the first question doesn't imply that there is a right answer.

**Do ask for more information.** Even when you think you know the answer, ask people why they do or say things. The answers will sometimes surprise you. A conversation started from one question should go on as long as it needs to.

**Do encourage stories.** Whether or not the stories people tell are true, they reveal how they think about the world. Ask questions that get people telling stories.

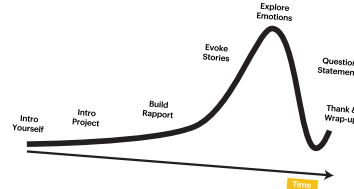
### Don't

**Don't suggest answers to your questions.** Even if they pause before answering, don't help them by suggesting an answer. This can unintentionally get people to say things that agree with your expectations.

**Don't ask binary questions.** Binary questions can be answered in a word; you want to host a conversation built upon stories.

**Don't frame a question with "usually..."** Instead, ask about a specific instance or occurrence, such as "tell me about the last time you \_\_\_\_\_"

**Don't be afraid of silence.** Interviewees often feel the need to ask another question when there is a pause. If you allow for silence, a person can reflect on what they've just said and may reveal something deeper.



Design Thinking

Design Thinking

[www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewQuestionWorksheet.pdf](http://www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewQuestionWorksheet.pdf)

[www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewQuestionFraming.pdf](http://www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewQuestionFraming.pdf)

[www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewBestPractices.pdf](http://www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/InterviewBestPractices.pdf)

More Resources:

[www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools.html](http://www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools.html)