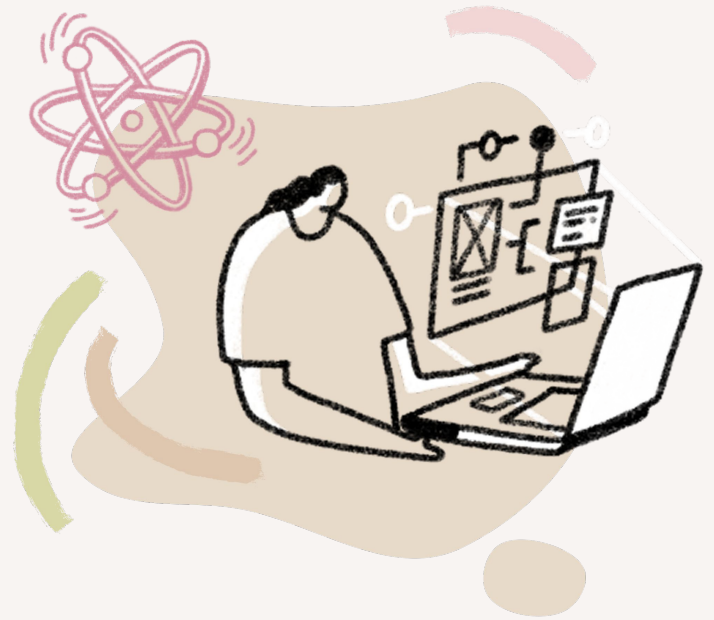


WORKSHOP

THE SCIENCE OF USER INTERVIEWS

Facilitated by Eniola Abioye – CEO | UX Outloud



Meet Eniola!



Eniola Abioye

CEO at UX Outloud

- Oakland born and raised :)
- Qualitative UXR for 11 years and a CEO for 6 🎉
- Tech-focused UX career coach making career strategy and upskilling approachable
- Previously led research at Meta, Silicon Valley Bank, Kaiser Permanente
- 35 countries and counting!

Welcome!

AGENDA:

- ☆ Why user interviews?
- ☆ Behavioral Science Fundamentals
- ☆ Conversational Flow
- ☆ Framework for Guide Writing
- ☆ AI for Research



HOUSEKEEPING:



- 📖 Feel free to ask questions anytime by dropping them in the chat. Comments are welcome too!
- 📖 Slides will be made available to you so for now, just focus on digesting the content

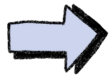
Why user interviews?





User interviews are a foundational UX research method for a few reasons:

- To understand the "why" behind behavior analytics.
- To uncover unmet user needs.
- To challenge stakeholder assumptions.
- To gather context and lived experience around product usage.
- To build empathy by immersing yourself in a user's world.
- To reduce risk in product development.



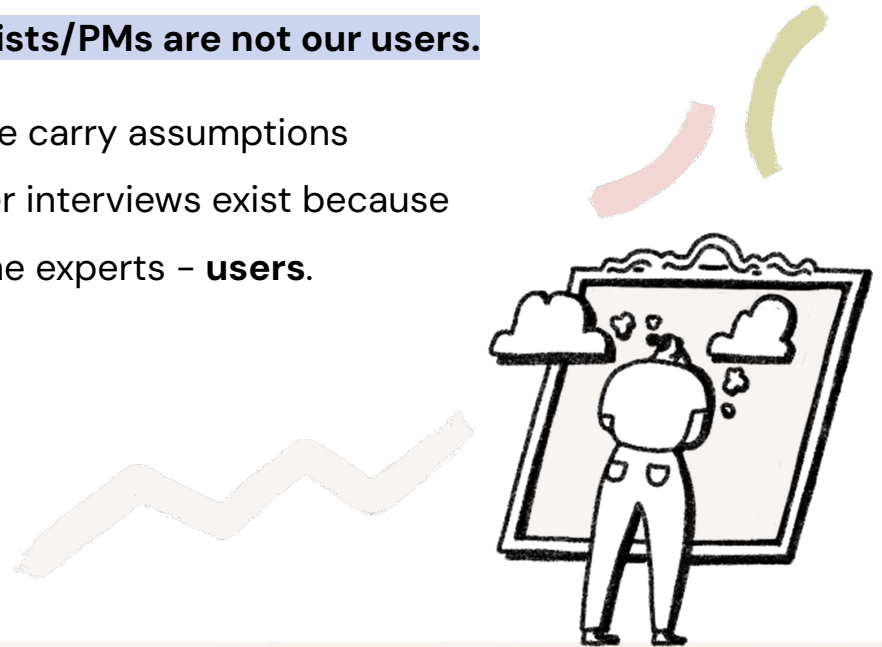
The biggest distinction from other methods is the *depth and flexibility* of data collection.





The foundation of why we leverage user interviews and of UX as a whole is Human-Centered Design.

- Human-Centered Design is built on one core belief:
we as **designers/developers/data scientists/PMs are not our users.**
- No matter how experienced the team is, we carry assumptions about how other people think and live. User interviews exist because rather than making assumptions, we ask the experts - **users.**





HCD is typically structured around a cycle of understanding, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing.



UNDERSTAND



DEFINE



IDEATE



PROTOTYPE



TEST

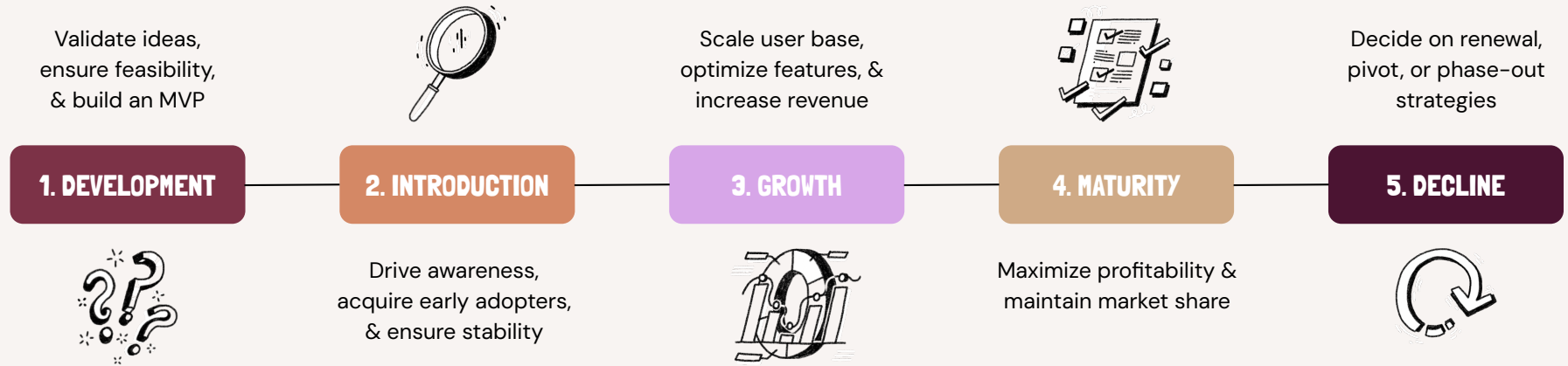
User interviews live primarily in the **understand** phase, although can show up throughout the product development process.

Before you define a problem or generate solutions, you need to deeply understand the human context — their goals, behaviors, frustrations, and environment. Interviews are the primary tool for building that understanding.

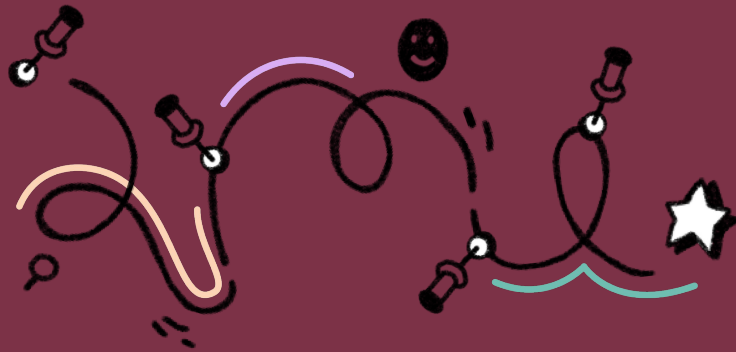


Product Lifecycle

Interviews have a place in each of these phases when the goal is to expand the team's knowledge (learn what we don't know)



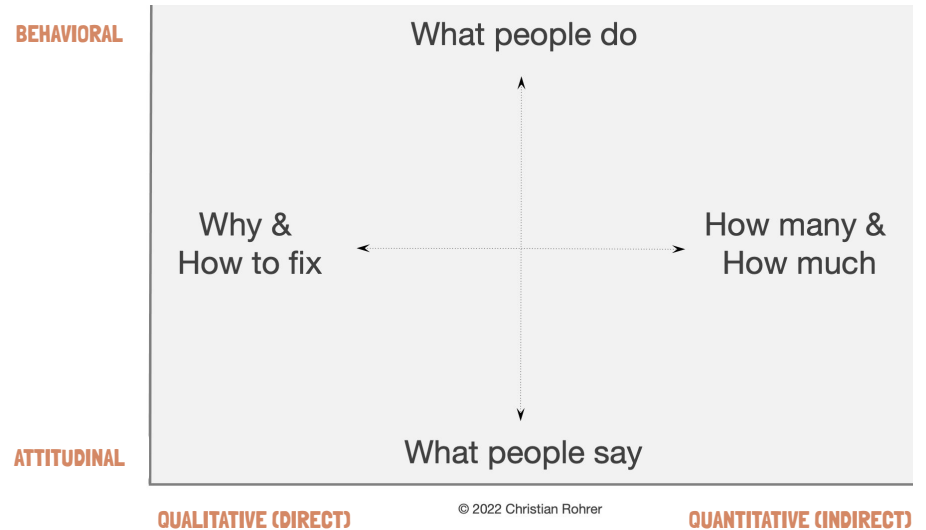
Behavioral Science Fundamentals



Behavioral vs Attitudinal

- **Attitudinal research** speaks to **what users say**, typically resonates most with more exploratory research earlier on in the product lifecycle
- **Behavioral research** is geared toward illuminating **what users will do when presented with options** or a prototype – most relevant later in the product lifecycle, think evaluative questions

Question types across the research methods landscape

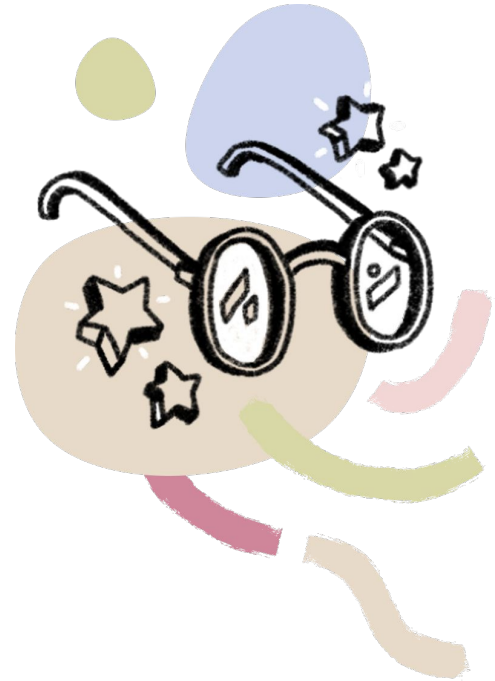


Let's understand bias

- A cognitive error, systematic distortion, or tendency to favor certain information, which leads to skewed perceptions, inaccurate judgments, or flawed, non-neutral design decisions (*as defined by NN/g*)



*bias in research done on humans by humans is inevitable, it cannot be eradicated, but should be managed



Forms of Bias

Confirmation Bias

- The tendency to focus on information that confirms existing beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence.



Social Bias

- Answering in a way they think is "correct" based on the line of questioning from the researcher.



Hawthorne Effect

- A form of observer bias where users alter their behavior simply because they know they are being watched.



Break Down Bias in Interviews

Inherent power dynamics during interviews fuel bias and can skew the results that you get, here's how to minimize it:

- **Gratitude** to your participant
- **Share** who you are, what you do, and what they should expect
- **Emphasize** that they are the expert of their own experience, which is the topic
- **Build** rapport in the course of the interview – think structured conversations, not just questions and answers



4 Elements of Observation

Authenticity

1

- Lived experience is the core of why we do user research.

Think – is what they're saying consistent with their body language, tone, volume, diction i.e. if they say a prototype is interesting, do they seem interested?

Spontaneity

3

- Does a theme or answer come up in response to a question or spontaneously?

Are the preferences they are sharing consistent with how they've behaved in the past?

Consistency

2

- Ask questions from multiple angles to mitigate confirmation bias.

Participants typically have a tendency to agree with the moderator if asked a "yes or no" question – mix it up a few times increase your data accuracy.

Rigor

4

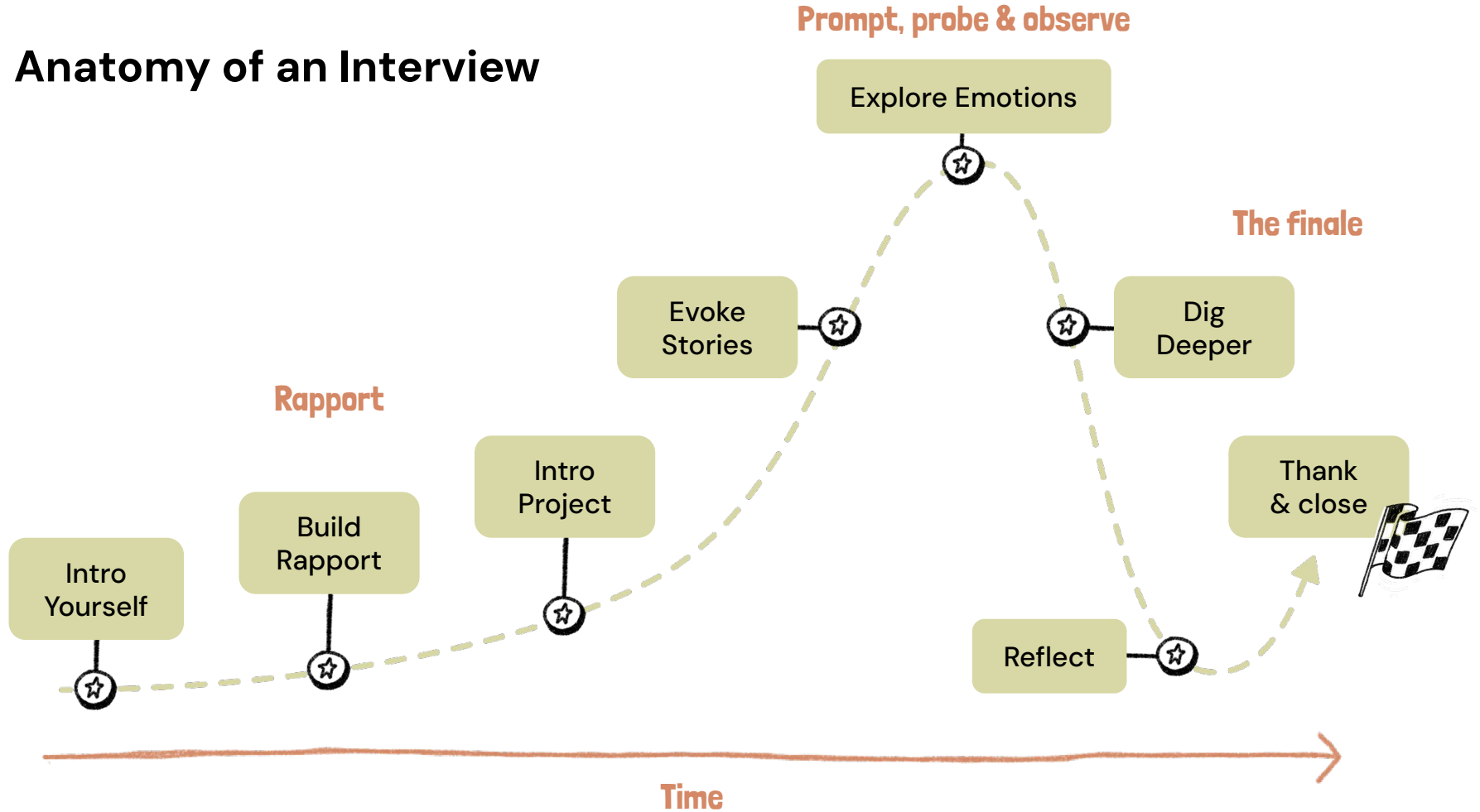
- Research design, questions, order of operations – did anything about the research design impact the feedback received?

Ex. participants are less likely to give paradigm-shifting feedback on high-fi experiences.

Conversational Flow



Anatomy of an Interview



Intro yourself AND user research

This may be their first time participating in UXR, give them some background on what the point of this session is.

Hi, my name is Eniola and I'm a user researcher at UX Outloud. Have you ever participated in a user research session before?

IF YES:

"Great! I'll spare you the whole spiel but a few quick reminders..."

IF NO:

"Awesome, thanks for joining me for your first research session. I'll give you a full rundown of what to expect, but really, we're just having a conversation today."

Gratitude – super important to settle any nerves

Thank you so much for taking the time to share your feedback today, I couldn't do my job without people being willing to share their experiences, so again I appreciate your being here!

Clarify your role

I am a researcher working for [*insert company*]. My role here is to remain neutral and learn from you as an independent researcher. I'm also not the one building this product so you won't hurt my feelings. There are no right or wrong answers, so please don't feel any pressure. I'm not assessing or grading you in any way so please feel free to share anything that comes to mind – the good, the bad, and the challenging parts of the process. We can also pause at any time if you have questions or don't feel comfortable answering a question.

Quick caveat if there are any observers

You might see a couple colleagues join the call to take notes for me so I can just focus on our conversation, but it will just be us actually chatting in the call.

Confirm time

Just to confirm, we discussed being in this session together for the next 45 minutes, does that still work for you?

Consent to record

Before we begin, do you mind if I record this session? The recording is only for internal research purposes and will not be shared publicly.

Build rapport with participant

You're facilitating a conversation and want to encourage them to be as comfortable and forthcoming as possible.

How's your day going? How was your weekend? Where are you calling in from?

Follow up on what they've mentioned



I'm interested in learning about your experience as a creator. If there are any questions you'd like to skip, please just let me know.

Start off nice and broad

To get started, can you introduce yourself - your name, your business, and where you're based?

Questions to get them comfortable speaking about what they know best, themselves

- How long have you been working as a content creator?
- Can you tell me a bit about your background and how you began working as a creator?
- How would you describe your typical week-to-week? What about month-to-month?

Introduce directionality of the conversation

- Probe: financial consistency, partnership pipeline
- Talk to me about your 1-year growth goals? How are you going to expand in the near future?
 - What challenges are you working through to get there?

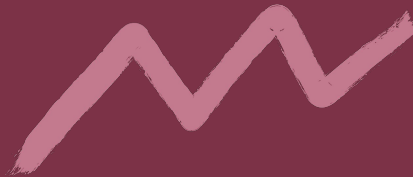
TIPS TO BUILD RAPPORT

A

Confirm your “why” before getting started

People can feel the difference between when researchers care about what they have to say and when they're just looking for answers to validate their previous findings or assumptions.

Know the difference between the two and excel in the former.



TIPS TO BUILD RAPPORT

B

Get to know your audience

Take the time to deepen your knowledge and experience in the industry that you're working in from the users' perspective. Being able to draw upon personal experience or connection you have to the people you're talking to will ground you in your work.



TIPS TO BUILD RAPPORT

C

Get to know your product

You can't thoroughly probe on things you don't know well, so **get familiar enough with a product to meet users where they are**. So my advice here is to learn as much as possible about your industry and gather knowledge about the components of users' end-to-end journeys before starting research. Set aside a couple of days before a project to submerge yourself in relevant subject matter.



TIPS TO BUILD RAPPORT

D

Warm up before you play

Treat a user research session as a conversation rather than an interview; this helps users loosen up and talk freely about their experiences.

Warm up users with questions that are most approachable, the low-pressure answers that they could talk all day about.



TIPS TO BUILD RAPPORT



Listen actively to understand

Qualitative research via zoom can be difficult, especially when a lot of us have screen fatigue, so we have to be intentional in how we engage.

This includes small things like:

- **Turning your camera on** even if the other person's is off – often times they'll join you on camera and even if they don't it's helpful to allow them to feed off of your energy.
- **Be aware of your facial expressions and body language**, remain open, curious and neutral – reinforcing answers leads to bias.
- **Strategic silence** – don't fill the gap; let pauses breathe.
- **Reinforce detail** – when a user goes deep, name and thank them for it. Positive reinforcement --> richer responses.
- If something is interesting and you'd like to hear more about it, say that. Encourage them to speak freely if you see they might be holding back.

Intro the project

Share with your users what you're hoping to learn in the session – not the research goals, conversational goals to reinforce that you're looking to learn about them.

Users speak much more confidently when they know what is most relevant for you to understand.



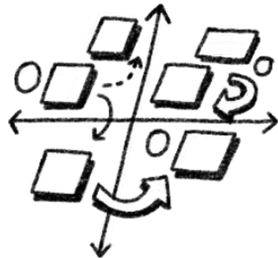
I want to understand what business data metrics you track and how you work with professionals to organize your business. You're the expert on running your business-which is why we wanted to speak with you!

- ★ **Do you have experience helping your creative partners gain funding through loans, investors, grants, fundraising, or donations?**
- ➔ **If so, what does that process look like in the creator economy?**

Evoke stories

Focus on open-ended questions rather than yes/no questions – you want to give the spaciousness of many possible answers to your questions rather than just two. **Discussion will reveal what's most important to them.**

Situational probing captures past behavior and more accurately predicts future behavior.



- ★ **Tell us about what services and professionals you've worked with to help shape your business.**

- ★ **Have you worked with coaches or consultants to help guide your business?**
 - ➔ **If so, what kind?**
 - ➔ **At what stage in your business did you work with each?**

- ★ **Do you have an agent or accountant that helps manage your finances and business data?**
 - ➔ **Or is that something you do yourself, and how do you go about doing that?**
 - ➔ **Which data points are more important for you to track?**

Explore emotions

Don't just focus on process – explore which elements of their journey are pain points, confusing, delightful, challenging, etc. This will help you triangulate the opportunity areas for the most change.



- ★ **Have you ever explored VC or angel investment for your business?**
 - ➔ **Why or why not? Probe interest in said investment**
 - ➔ **If you were to fundraise for your business right now, what would it be for? Probe: consistency in income, expansion, etc.**
- ★ **If you could create an ideal tool, database or platform out of thin air that would be helpful for tracking your financial data, and may be useful for prospective investors, what would this look like?**
 - ➔ **How would it be laid out? What information would be in there?**

Dig deeper

Interviews don't stop at questions and answers – probe to get nuance in your feedback. Start with why and continue until you understand their reasoning and contributing factors.

“Can you tell me more about why this experience was especially successful?”



Reflect

Give a recap of your top takeaways from the session and check to see what you may have missed. This gives the participant a chance to zoom out and share final points that didn't come up before.

“Thank you so much for all of the details you’ve shared today around your experience, and for including what’s not gone so well. Is there anything we’ve missed in today’s conversation?”



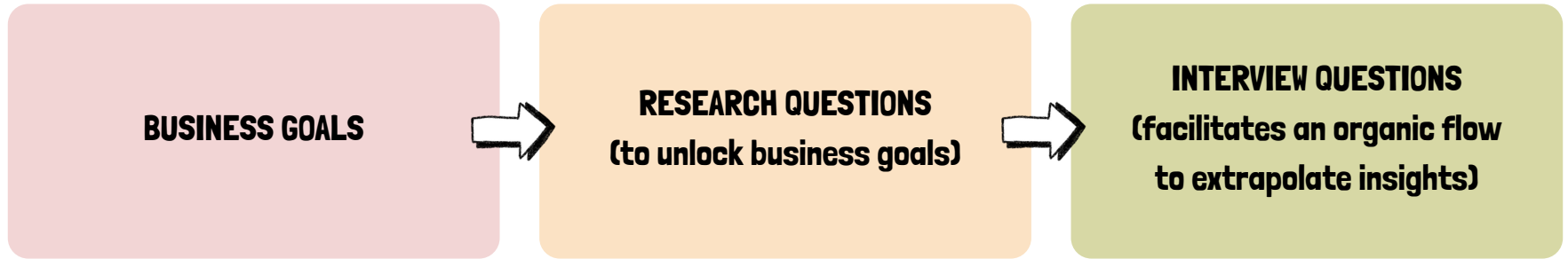


5-min break

Framework for Guide Writing



Framework for Guide Writing



Question Laddering

1

Introduce topic and start out with high level questions to contextualize their experience

2

Ask for an expanded explanation of their work or for their recollection on the last time they had an experience relevant to the conversation

evoke natural storytelling

3

Explore what the journey looks like

pain points, JTBD, opportunities for delight

4

Reserved for the most relevant pieces of a response (that's how you stay on track conversationally)



1. Introduce Topic → High-Level Questions (Set the Frame)

Goal: Establish context without biasing toward specific behaviors

Script:

- “To start, can you tell me a bit about how you use Notion in your day-to-day?”
- “What role does it play in your work or personal systems?”
- “What kinds of things do you rely on it for most?”

What you’re listening for:

- Scope of usage (light vs system-critical)
- Domains (personal productivity, business ops, etc.)
- Degree of usage (systems thinking and segmentation, not just note-taking)



Question Laddering

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2. Specific Situation (Anchor in Reality)

Goal: Move from abstract → concrete behavior

Script:

- “Think about the last time you used Notion for something important—can you walk me through that?”
- “What were you trying to accomplish?”
- “Where did that task start, and what triggered it?”

Follow-up prompts (light probing):

- “Was this a typical use case or something unusual?”
- “How often do you do something like this?”

What you’re extracting:

- Entry points into workflows
- Triggers (internal vs external)
- Real (not idealized) behavior



Question Laddering

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Introduce topic and start out with high level questions to contextualize their experience

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Ask for an expanded explanation of their work or for their recollection on the last time they had an experience relevant to the conversation

evoke natural storytelling

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pain points, JTBD, opportunities for delight

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3. Journey Mapping (Core conversation)

Goal: Deconstruct the workflow step-by-step

Script:

- “Walk me through what happened step by step.”
- “What was the first thing you did when you opened Notion?”
- “What happened next?”

Explicitly probe for:

- Pain points → “Where did things slow down or break?”
- JTBD → “What were you ultimately trying to get done here?”
- Delight → “Was there anything that worked particularly well or felt smooth?”

What you’re mapping:

- Workflow structure (sequence, dependencies)
- Friction points
- Optimization layers



Question Laddering

1

Introduce topic and start out with high level questions to contextualize their experience

2

Ask for an expanded explanation of their work or for their recollection on the last time they had an experience relevant to the conversation

evoke natural storytelling

3

Explore what the journey looks like

pain points, JTBD, opportunities for delight

4

Reserve probes for the most relevant pieces of a response (that's how you stay on track conversationally)



4. Probing Questions (selective value sourcing)

Goal: Go deep especially where signal exists

This is where you deploy: Why | How | When | Who | What

User: "I usually export it from Notion and run it through another tool..."

Probe:

- "Why do you need to leave Notion for that step?"
- "What's missing in Notion that forces that?"
- "How did you figure out that workaround?"

User: "I built a dashboard that connects multiple databases..."

Probe:

- "How did you decide to structure it that way?"
- "What problem was that solving for you?"
- "What would break if that system didn't exist?"

User: "I use formulas to automate most of this..."

Probe:

- "What led you to start using formulas?"
- "What did your workflow look like before that?"
- "What does this enable you to do that others might not?"

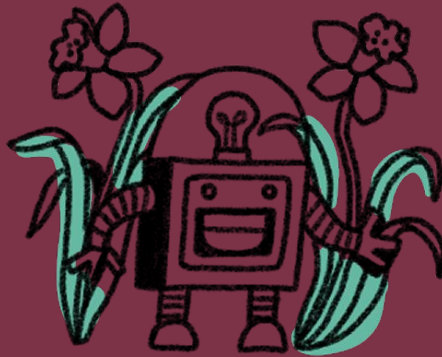
Off-script interviewing

This art form is the balance between centering conversation goals and following the participants lead – the space you give yourself in this balance will depend largely on where you are in the product lifecycle – exploratory or evaluative.

- Do you understand the core of what you're looking to learn?
- What are the three most important things you want to walk away from the convo with – if you only had 15 minute what would you cover?



AI for Research Speed & Rigor

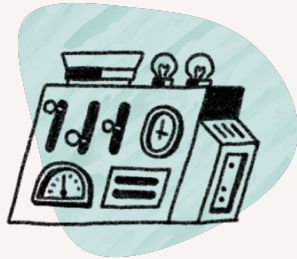


**Which AI tools are you currently using
in your research workflows?**





AI Research Applications



Before the Interview



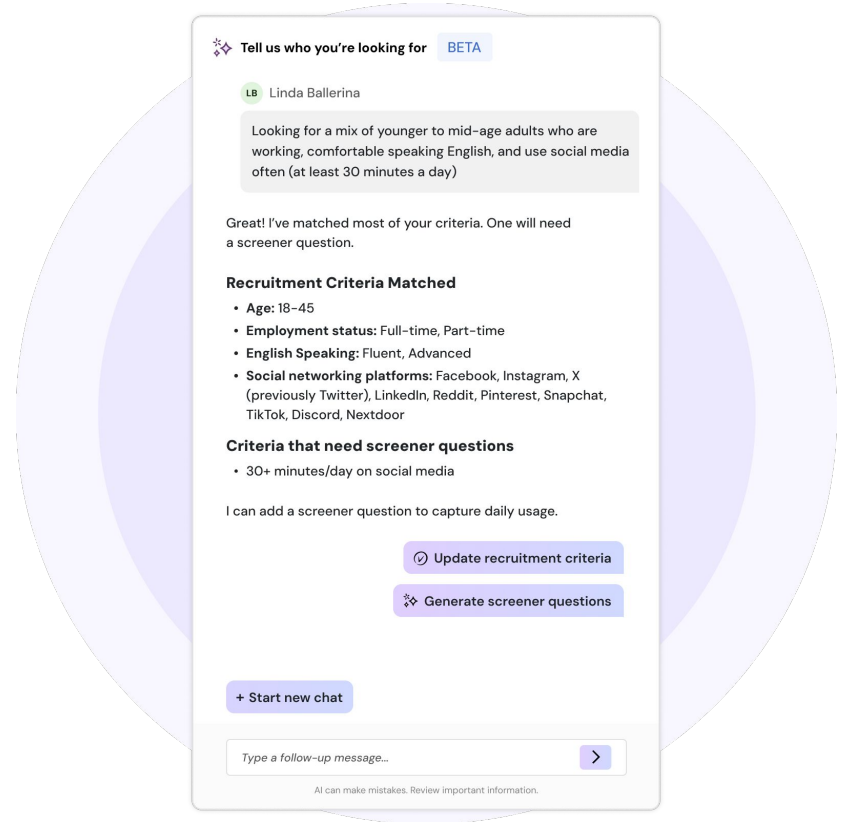
During the Interview



After the interview

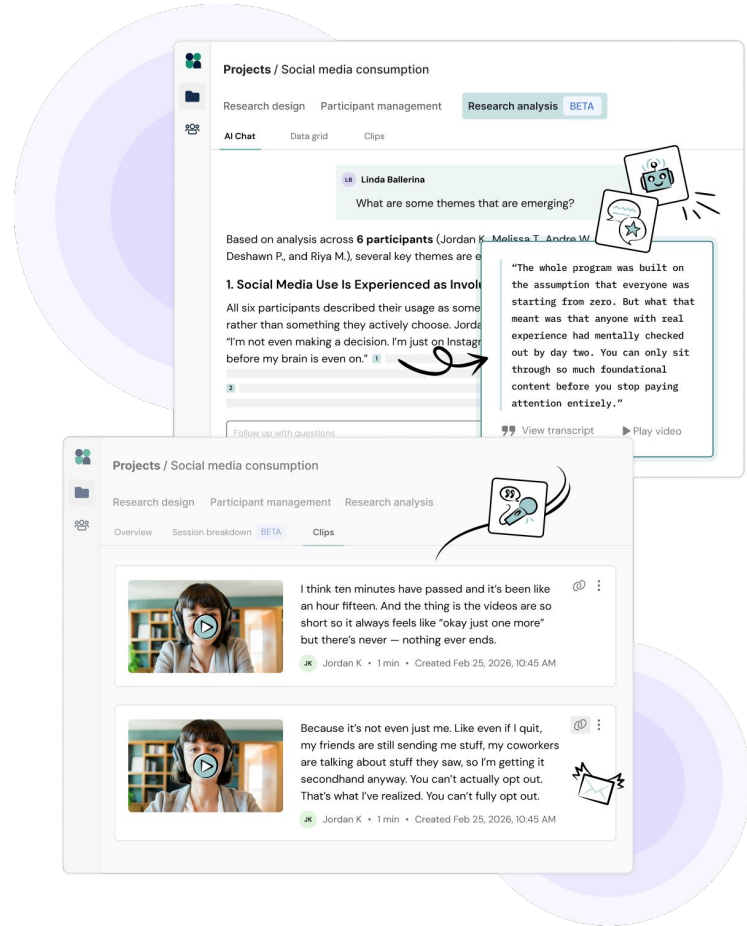
Before the Interview

- **Review** stakeholder briefs and extract implied research questions
- **Drafting discussion guide questions** (with you doing final judgment on framing and bias risk)
- **Flagging** potentially leading or biased questions in your guide



During the Interview

- **Live transcription** (tools like Otter.ai, Fireflies, etc.) so you can stay present instead of note-taking
- **Auto-generated timestamped notes** to revisit key moments later
- **Mark clips** that might be useful to showcase in your deck

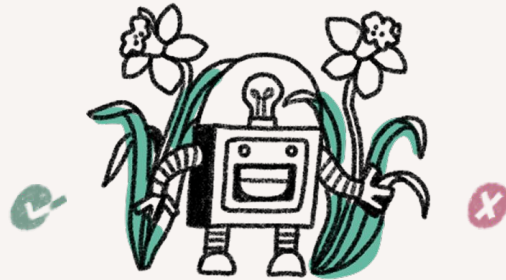


After the interview

- **Generate session breakdowns** – theme and pattern extraction to structure synthesis outputs
- Surfacing standout **quotes** that support emerging findings
- **Frame product recommendations** in accordance to research and business goals
- **Drafting** findings reports or insight decks for stakeholders

The screenshot displays a software interface for research analysis. The main header shows 'Projects / Researcher perception study' with navigation icons for a folder, calendar, email, and user profiles (RR, MG). Below this, there are tabs for 'Research design', 'Participant management', and 'Research analysis'. Under 'Research analysis', there are sub-tabs for 'Session breakdown', 'Data grid', and 'Deep analysis'. The 'Session breakdown' tab is active, showing a card for 'Prescott Knox', a 'Lead User Researcher' from 'Portland, OR', who is 'Scheduled'. The card includes a profile picture, name, age (Male, 43), and social media icons for Facebook and LinkedIn. Below the card, there is a 'Research walkthrough' section with a list of three items, each with a handwritten-style quote and a number (1, 2, 3). A hand-drawn icon of a notepad with a pencil and a star is connected by a line to the first item in the list. To the right, a 'Video interview and transcript' panel is visible, featuring a play button icon and tabs for 'Transcript', 'Characteristics', 'Screening', 'Session', and 'Messages'. Below the tabs, there are sections for 'PN Prescott Knox' and 'RR Riley Researcher', each with several lines of placeholder text.

Here's what the AI Insight Assistant can do!



AI Insights helps you:

- Organize conversations into structured observations
- Compare participants from the same study side by side
- Surface qualitative evidence faster
- Verify accuracy and context with links back to real participant quotes



AI Insights does not:

- Replace research expertise
- Decide which insights matter
- Produce conclusions without review



COURSE 9

AI Insights & Analysis

7 lessons | 2h15m to complete



Course Creators: Lizzy Burnam | Paolo Appley

? Who is this course for?

- UX researchers and people who do research (PwDRs)
- Research Ops
- New or experienced users of User Interviews

📖 What you'll learn:

- How to use AI-assisted analysis features to move from sessions to synthesis faster
- How to verify AI-generated outputs
- How to share and export research findings with stakeholders



[Begin the course](#)



THANK YOU!

Questions

<https://userinterview.ws/demo>



[BOOK A DEMO](https://userinterview.ws/demo)

