

## Learner Verification and Revision

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### Tips on Interviewing

- Q. *What should I do while the person is reading the material?*
- A. Have some notes or other reading material with you so that you can be busy looking at something, not looking directly at the person. Some interviewers have found that giving attention to the children (if present) helps.

### During the interview

- Q. *What's the most important thing to keep in mind while interviewing?*
- A. To record exactly what the person says without any interpretation. Broken phrases or slang expressions are important cues for us to learn about language that may communicate more effectively.
- Q. *Suppose the person starts asking me questions about what the piece is actually saying. How should I handle these questions?*
- A. First of all, jot down his or her questions because these may be important cues for us that the point being made is not clear.

Next, acknowledge the question by saying something like, "I'm glad you asked that question. I'll be glad to talk about that as soon as we finish here. Right now, I'd like to go on to . . ."

If you break the train of thought of the interview at this point and digress by giving an explanation, then the whole focus shifts away from the material being tested. It could become a teaching session rather than a learner verification test. You can answer any questions *after* the interview is completed.

- Q. *Do I have to ask the questions as written on the questionnaire?*
- A. Yes. Consistency is necessary among all the different interviews. Please ask the questions the way they're phrased, and in the sequence they are given. Don't skip around.

- Q. *What if I don't understand the answer given to a question I asked?*
- A. The best way to handle this situation is to probe by asking, "Can you tell me what you mean by that?" or, "Please tell me more about that." In any case, write down exactly what the responses are, regardless of your concerns.
- Q. *Should I give encouragement and support during the interview process, such as, "That's right"?*
- A. No. Your purpose is to be as objective as possible in asking the interview questions. Do not influence responses or shift the focus of the interview to one where the respondent is trying to please the interviewer. Likewise, do not interrupt the interview by explaining any answers that are "wrong" or appear off base. It is acceptable to say "Okay" in a neutral fashion after an answer is given.
- In addition, if a respondent asks you if his answer to a question or interpretation to a page is right or wrong, you might respond with: "We're really just interested in your opinion, what makes sense to you."
- Record *all* responses as given. There is no right or wrong when you're trying to identify potential problems.
- Q. *How can I help the respondent feel comfortable?*
- A. The best way is to have a friendly demeanor and be an active listener. This includes eye contact with your respondent, smiling when appropriate, assuming an open physical posture, and responding to comments with nonleading probes. Everyone likes to be asked their opinions about a topic with which they're familiar.

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## Experience Speaks . . . Advice on Interviewing Techniques from Several Experienced Interviewers for Learner Verification and Revision<sup>1</sup>

### SELECTING TESTERS

- If possible, use testers from the same ethnic group.
- For foreign testers, make sure they don't change the questions or leave out questions that they don't care to ask.
- It is helpful if the testers have some counseling background.
- Consider two people to do interviews: one to ask questions and one to take notes.

### INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERVIEW

- Consider saying: "We're asking lots of people about this booklet and trying to get an idea how *most* of them feel about it. It's in rough draft form here, so it's still easy to change it to make the finished one more clear."
- You may tell people during the introduction preamble that you didn't develop the piece. You're just checking it out, so you won't be offended by whatever they say.

**READING OF THE MATERIAL**

- When people are busy reading, the tester should be busy with some other activity nearby. It makes people nervous if you hover over them as you read.

**DURING THE INTERVIEW**

- Sometimes it's hard to get all the things written down that are being said. Some people want to say more and talk about the material. To solve this problem, write key words and phrases.
- Most people aren't prepared to offer ideas for changes/improvements. Stimulating examples or questions are needed to bring out their ideas.

**AFTERWARD**

- If possible, give the respondents a copy of the preliminary piece being tested and thank them. It makes them feel good about what they have done.

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**Sample Questionnaire for Interviewers to Evaluate Their Experience**

*Purpose:* to give sponsor feedback on Learner Verification and Revision experience<sup>2</sup>

Would you help us by sharing your learner verification experience? We would like to know what you encountered and what we might be able to do in the future to make the process even more productive.

1. Total number of learner verification interviews conducted:
2. Total number of people approached who refused to participate:
3. Reasons given for refusal, if available:
4. Approximate minutes per interview:
5. What might we have included in the instructions that would have made the interviews more productive?
6. Is there anything that we could have left out?
7. What kind of problems did you encounter, if any?
8. We would like to have your opinion of the material itself. What do you think of it? Any suggestions for change?

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**Tabulation of Responses for Large Samples**

For large samples (30 or more): A more formal spreadsheet tabulation is preferable for larger samples. Computer programs for spreadsheets offer several flexible frameworks for the layout. Using these tabular frameworks, it is easy to keyboard in the response data. A computer printout of the responses can provide you with an easy-to-scan tabulation so you can quickly identify trouble spots in the material being tested. An example of a computer-generated tabulation sheet is shown in Figure D-1. The figure shows only a part of the actual tabulation.

Function of questions:

comprehension

acceptability

	B1	B1	C	C
Code	10. What is new?	11. First thing Jackie did to start?	12.a. Would you talk to your MD?	12b. If no, why?
03-10-16	It says she's walking and eating better.	Her clothes were too tight and her feet hurt (I asked the question again.) Oh, she talked to her doctor first.	No	Cause most of the time they give you a bunch of stuff to read and tell you not to eat so much and want you to starve yourself.
03-10-17	She walks, she eats more fruits and vegetables.	She talked to her doctor about plan to lose weight.	Probably after I tried a diet.	Probably be cheaper.
03-10-18	She's eating more fruits, vegg, and less fat.	She started eating less.	Yes	
03-10-19	Eating more fruits and vegetables and less fat. out a simple plan.	Talk to her doctor, decided how much weight she wanted to lose and worked	Yes	
03-10-20	Walk more.	She talked to her doctor.	I might if I had one.	
03-10-21	She is walking, eating more fruits and vegetables	Talked to her doctor.	Yes	

Responses

**FIGURE D-1**

Tabulation of six responses to a booklet, "Jackie and Rhonda," for African Americans on losing weight and eating more fruits and vegetables to cut their risk of cancer. (Source: National Cancer Institute, Branch of Special Populations)

**References**

1. Feedback at National Cancer Institute conference (October 25, 1991): Barbara Pryor, RD, Columbus, OH; Sarah Furnas, RN, Philadelphia, PA; Joan Rupp, RD, San Diego, CA.
2. National Cancer Institute (1992): Branch of Special Populations, Nutrition Guideline for Ethnic Groups.