



Interviews

Interviews are a verbal method to gather detailed and specific information about children and young people's experiences, thoughts, opinions, and beliefs on various topics.³³

The benefits of interviews

- **Flexibility:** You can tailor the questions, pace and style to each child or young person. This makes interviews adaptable across a range of contexts and topics.
- **Versatile formats:** Interviews can be conducted in multiple formats – face-to-face, online or by phone - and adapted to suit different ages, abilities and cultural contexts. Face-to-face and online interviews allow you to observe non-verbal cues (e.g. facial expressions or body language) that can enrich your understanding.
- **Enhanced engagement:** Interviews can be enhanced with child-focused activities to make them more engaging and help children express themselves more freely. For example, using drawing or storytelling can encourage richer responses.²⁵



Keep in mind

- **Time and resource intensity:** Preparing, conducting and processing (transcribing, coding, cleaning, analysing) interview data can be resource-heavy.
- **Qualitative depth vs. generalisability:** Interviews yield rich, in-depth qualitative information but do not typically produce population-level findings (i.e. findings that are generalisable).⁴¹





Planning considerations



- Choose an interview type that aligns with your project or research question, aims, and objectives to ensure relevant and valuable data collection.⁴¹
- Types of interviews include:⁴¹
 - Structured interviews, often used in quantitative research, involve strictly following a set list of questions, providing consistency across participants, and making it easier to compare responses.
 - Unstructured interviews are more conversational and open-ended, allowing themes to develop naturally, which can yield deeper qualitative insights.
 - Semi-structured interviews blend the two approaches, using a flexible set of guiding questions that let participants steer the conversation, offering both structure and adaptability.
- Consider a child-friendly approach to interviews by pairing the interview with a fun and engaging activity (e.g. [Art-based activity](#), [Photography](#), [Task-oriented or activity-based method](#)). This helps build trust, encourages more authentic responses and minimises potential discomfort or risks.

Interview questions. Design and draft your interview questions to ensure they are clear, relevant, and engaging. Consider involving children and young people independent from your participants (e.g. an advisory group), who can provide guidance and feedback on the questions you plan to ask. See the [Communication](#) section for guidance on developing and testing your questions.

Time. Interview duration depends on balancing question scope, available time, and the child or young person's age. It may range from 10–15 minutes to an hour and should be agreed upon through ongoing consent.

Materials. Tools like recording devices and transcription or coding software e.g. NVivo can be used to capture the interaction for accuracy and to streamline analysis.

Tips for conducting your interview



Starting the interview

Building trust is key to open conversations. Start by introducing yourself and using [icebreakers](#) to build rapport.³³ Warm-up conversational-style questions about age, school, interests or feelings about their day can help the child or young person feel comfortable before formal questions or sensitive topics.^{25,33}

It's important for a child or young person to know what is going to happen, so explaining the activity can be useful. It is also important for them to know what to do if they don't want to answer a question, want a break, or no longer want to participate. See [Consent](#) for more information on what it might look like, and ways to discuss, withdrawal of consent in children.

During the interview

Open-ended questions – questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' – are one of the best ways to elicit rich responses during an interview.^{25,58}

- 'Can you tell me about a time when you felt proud of something you did?'
- 'What do you think is the best part of being involved in [activity or topic]?'
- 'How do you feel when you're at school (or another setting)?'
- 'If you could change one thing about [specific topic or environment], what would it be and why?'
- 'What do you enjoy doing the most, and why does it make you happy?'



Supporting participants

- Show encouragement (e.g. nodding, repeating responses, or giving positive feedback) to prompt further elaboration.⁵⁸
- Frame questions as requests (e.g. ‘Please tell me about the photograph you took’) for richer responses.⁵⁸
- Avoid bundling multiple questions together to prevent confusion.⁵⁸
- Allow sufficient pauses between questions, as silence may indicate thinking rather than refusal or uncertainty.
- Be patient—children may need time to process and respond.

Concluding the interview

- Check-in with the child or young person at the end of the interview. Check how they are feeling - it gives them a chance to share if anything made them feel worried or upset during the interview. This also allows for timely referrals to appropriate support services if required.¹⁹
- You may also like to leave the child or young person and/or their caregiver with a ‘thank you leaflet’ or ‘summary sheet’. This could contain further information about the project, links to additional resources or services and your contact details if they wish to follow-up with you or your team in the future.¹⁹