

## Interdisciplinary Projects: How to Conduct a Research Interview

(modified from <http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/students/ftHE%20RESEARCH%20PAPERstudents.htm>)

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### Types of Interviews

In order to learn the views, opinions, and evaluations of qualified experts, we conduct interviews. Interviews can be of two types. Your interview must be structured, but unstructured moments are encouraged.

- In **structured interviews**, students prepare a set of questions and try to obtain answers to these questions. Data analysis is easier, because they have comparable categories for each respondent, and students can analyze what each respondent said as an answer to each question and compare and contrast their answers.
- **Unstructured interviews**: The students only have the topic of the interview but no set questions to ask the interviewee. The interview may follow whatever course the interviewee chooses to talk about. Every subject may dwell on a different aspect of the topic in question, and as a result, data from individual subjects may not be comparable. On the other hand, such data provide in depth information in great detail about individual subjects.

### The Interview Process

**A. Finding Subjects:** The selection of subjects to be interviewed depends on the topic of study. However, there are certain guidelines the interviewer should not neglect:

- In general, do not interview people you know well personally. In such cases, the subjects may hesitate to open up and share their genuine opinions with the interviewer they know personally. The answers they may give will be answers given to the person they know personally, not the answers they would give to an interviewer with whom they have no personal relations.
- It is difficult to find the right people to interview. One way is using your contacts. If you know people who know the people you want to interview, use your contacts and get an introduction to those people.
- If you have no contacts, you may go and contact directly the people you want to study. If you are lucky and approach the target group wisely, most people may agree to collaborate with you.
- Always introduce yourself, tell your name, where you come from, your school, what your study is about, what you are trying to do. If necessary, get a letter from your teacher describing your research study and introducing you.

### **B. The Interview**

- The interview should last as long as necessary for the interviewer to obtain the answers he/she needs, and for the interviewee to express his/her opinions adequately.
- If possible, record the interview. To do the recording, it is necessary to ask for the permission of the interviewee first.
- Make sure that all your preset questions are answered.
- Take notes during the interview. Taking notes helps you to record impressions that might have gotten lost if not written down and also shows to the interviewee that you are actively interested in what he has to say. As soon as you get home, write down your impressions, comments, etc. before you forget them. It is a good idea to keep a research journal in which you record all your observations, questions, problems, and interpretations.

### **C. Tips on how to conduct the Interview**

Most people are happy to answer the questions asked by students and welcome them, showing a cooperative attitude. However, there are a few guidelines about which every wise researcher must be careful:

- Be respectful, friendly, and accepting. Establishing a connection with the person you're interviewing is one of the secrets to a great interview.
- Don't argue with your interviewees.
- Don't judge them as right or wrong.
- Let them talk at their own speed, with their choice of topics. Sometimes it may be necessary to guide the subjects into the topic of the interview, asking a few questions, clarifying points.

### After the Interview

Analysis of interviews: The data obtained during the interviews can be analyzed in two ways.

1. Each interview can be analyzed and reported as an individual case. The researcher summarizes the data, highlights certain points, lists points of importance, and draws conclusions.
2. Data from different interviews can be analyzed for comparative purposes, thus each respondent's answers are classified and interpreted in terms of points of comparison, in terms of their attitude to certain topics. Their opinions, evaluations, responses are classified and then compared.