

Recording and Analyzing Structured Interviews in MS Word or MS Excel

If you are using a structured interview schedule (list of questions) in which you ask the same set of questions in roughly the same order of everyone you interview, your questions form the first level of coding. Within each question you will identify sub codes or themes about your question.



Because of this predetermined structure, you can simply write in people's responses by hand on a paper form with the questions printed on it or type the responses below the questions in an electronic word document.

1. Record each interview in a separate word document.
2. Put the number of the question at the beginning of the response, for example, Q1, Q2, Q3, followed by the respondent's pseudonym or unique identifier.

You can then use the program's "find" function to search through each interview for responses by question, copy them, and paste them into another document in a table or a running text for further analysis. For example, you might want to collect all the responses to question 1 to compare them and identify sub codes.

Below is an example created for this exercise to show how this might look.

Evaluation of a collaboration to develop an HIV prevention program

Staff at Agency A worked with Agency X and Agency Y on HIV-prevention programs. Program leaders wanted to identify the factors that contributed to differences in working with the two agencies. They developed a structured list of questions that they asked of staff members of their agency about their experience. Figure 1 provides an example of how responses would be recorded. At the beginning of each response, include the number of the question and the person's pseudonym or identifier (e.g., Q1

John) so that if you later sort the responses by theme across interviews you know their source and can go back to the full interview.

Figure 1 Partial Interview Transcript

Question 1. Tell me about your experience working with Agency X

Q1 John I worked with Agency X on two different projects. The first was to create a program for MSM who were HIV negative. The second was to organize booths for a series of health fairs at local universities. The first project went very well, as we had a clear objective, timeline, and a grant from the state health department...

Question 2. What barriers did you encounter in working with Agency Y?

Q2 John The most difficult part of working with Agency Y was that their offices were on the other side of town. We were working to develop a new program and needed time to just toss around ideas outside of formal meetings. By the time we'd set up a meeting some of the best ideas no longer seemed fresh....

In a separate word document:

Table 1. Responses by Participants to Question 1

Q1 Tell me about your experience working with Agency X

Participant	Code	Response
John	Clarity of task	I worked with Agency X on two different projects. The first was to create a program for MSM who were HIV negative. The second was to organize booths for a series of health fairs at local universities. The first project went very well, as we had a clear objective, timeline, and a grant from the state health department...
Beth	Proximity	I loved that their offices were right down the hall. It saved a lot of time from long chains of emails about issues that could be quickly decided in short conversation.
Susan	Commitment	The staff at Agency X were really committed to the new program and that made the process easy, fun really [chuckles]*...
Beth	Commitment	The folks at Agency X really liked the idea of the new program. They wanted to see it succeed.
Steve	Clarity of task	We were all on the same page. Our goals were clear.
John	Proximity	Their offices [Agency X] are right down the hall and around the corner. When I had a question or an idea I wanted to test out, I could just walk over and talk to someone on the team.

*Information that is not directly from the transcript but that informs the analysis is usually placed in brackets. This could clarify who is speaking, the person or organization the speaker refers to, a long pause in their speech or nonverbal communication that is important to note.

In Table 1, responses are order by participant. But you might want to compare the responses that have the same code or subtheme. To do this:

1. Place your cursor in the table.
2. In the paragraph section of the ribbon, select the icon with the letter A over the letter Z with a down arrow to the right (sort function).
3. In the dialog box, under “sort by,” click on the down arrow and select Column 2 (Code column in Table 1). The right hand boxes will automatically be filled in with Type: Text and Using: Paragraphs.
4. In the bottom left hand corner of the dialog box be sure to select the button “My list has” header row. That way the header row stays at the top of the table. Click “ok” and the table will be sorted by codes as in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses by Code, Question 1

Q1 Tell me about your experience working with Agency X

Participant	Code	Response
John	Clarity of task	I worked with Agency X on two different projects. The first was to create a program for MSM who were HIV negative. The second was to organize booths for a series of health fairs at local universities. The first project went very well, as we had a clear objective, timeline, and a grant from the state health department...
Steve	Clarity of task	We were all on the same page. Our goals were clear.
Susan	Commitment	The staff at Agency X were really committed to the new program and that made the process easy, fun really [chuckles]*...
Beth	Commitment	The folks at Agency X really liked the idea of the new program. They wanted to see it succeed.
Beth	Proximity	I loved that their offices were right down the hall. It saved a lot of time from long chains of emails about issues that could be quickly decided in short conversation.
John	Proximity	Their offices [Agency X] are right down the hall and around the corner. When I had a question or an idea I wanted to test out, I could just walk over and talk to someone on the team.

Repeat with each question in your interview. From these tables you can then identify patterns both within a specific interview and across a group of interviews. For example, with the limited data presented here (for illustration only, these are not actual interviews), you could say “The people we interviewed identified commitment, clarity of the task, and physical proximity as key elements that made working with Agency X easy.”

You could also do the same thing in Excel, putting the responses for each question in a separate sheet in your workbook as in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Responses to Question 1 in an excel worksheet

Participant	Code	Response
John	Clarity of Task	I worked with Agency X on two different projects. The first was to create a program for MSM who were HIV negative. The second was to organize booths for a series of health fairs at local universities. The first project went very well, as we had a clear objective, timeline, and a grant from the state health department...
Steve	Clarity of Task	We were all on the same page. Our goals were clear.
Susan	Commitment	The staff at Agency X were really committed to the new program and that made the process easy, fun really [chuckles]...
Beth	Commitment	The folks at Agency X really liked the idea of the new program. They wanted to see it succeed.