

Interviews



This activity will help you to:

- *Assess the strengths & weaknesses of ways of recording interview data*
- *Understand and recall what is meant by 'interviewer effects'*
- *Consider the factors that may affect the validity of interview data*

In an interview, a researcher gathers data by asking questions directly to a participant. This is often done face to face but may also happen over the telephone or (increasingly) through computer mediated communication (e.g. a web chat).

However the interview is done, the researcher needs to record the participant's responses. For each of the following means of recording PPs' responses, suggest some possible advantages and disadvantages.

method	advantages	disadvantages
Waiting until the interview is over and writing up notes on the PP's responses		
Taking notes on the PP's responses during the interview		
Using a tape recorder and transcribing the PP's responses later		
Using a video camera/recorder and transcribing the PP's responses later		

The Validity of Interview Data

Some researchers believe that, compared with questionnaire-derived data, interview data are more likely to be valid. Suggest some possible reasons for holding this view.

Because an interview is a social situation it can be affected by all sorts of factors besides those the researcher is interested in. This can affect the validity of the data obtained. Suggest some ways that validity might be affected in the following interview scenarios.

A young researcher interviews senior technicians at a factory to find out about the efficiency of working practices.

A researcher interviews 14 year-old schoolboys about their attitudes toward gender equality.

A Caucasian American researcher interviews Black American pre-schoolers to assess their educational aptitude.