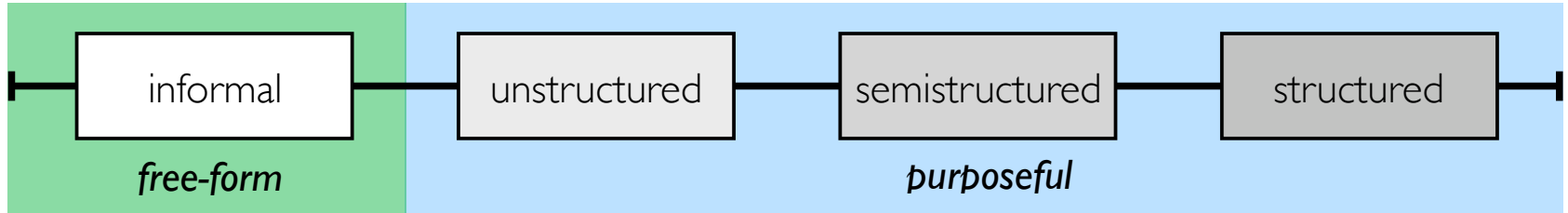


# INTERVIEWS

# range of interview types



## -INFORMAL

- no structure or control of discussion

## -UNSTRUCTURED

- loosely structured with little control
- but, clearly an interview

## -SEMISTRUCTURED

- mostly structured with moderate control
- follow an interview guide

## -STRUCTURED

- completely structured with total control
- verbal survey

# General Structure

“begins with the most general information and then moves to more and more specific questions before stepping back for a bigger perspective and concluding with a summary and wrap-up”



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Why?

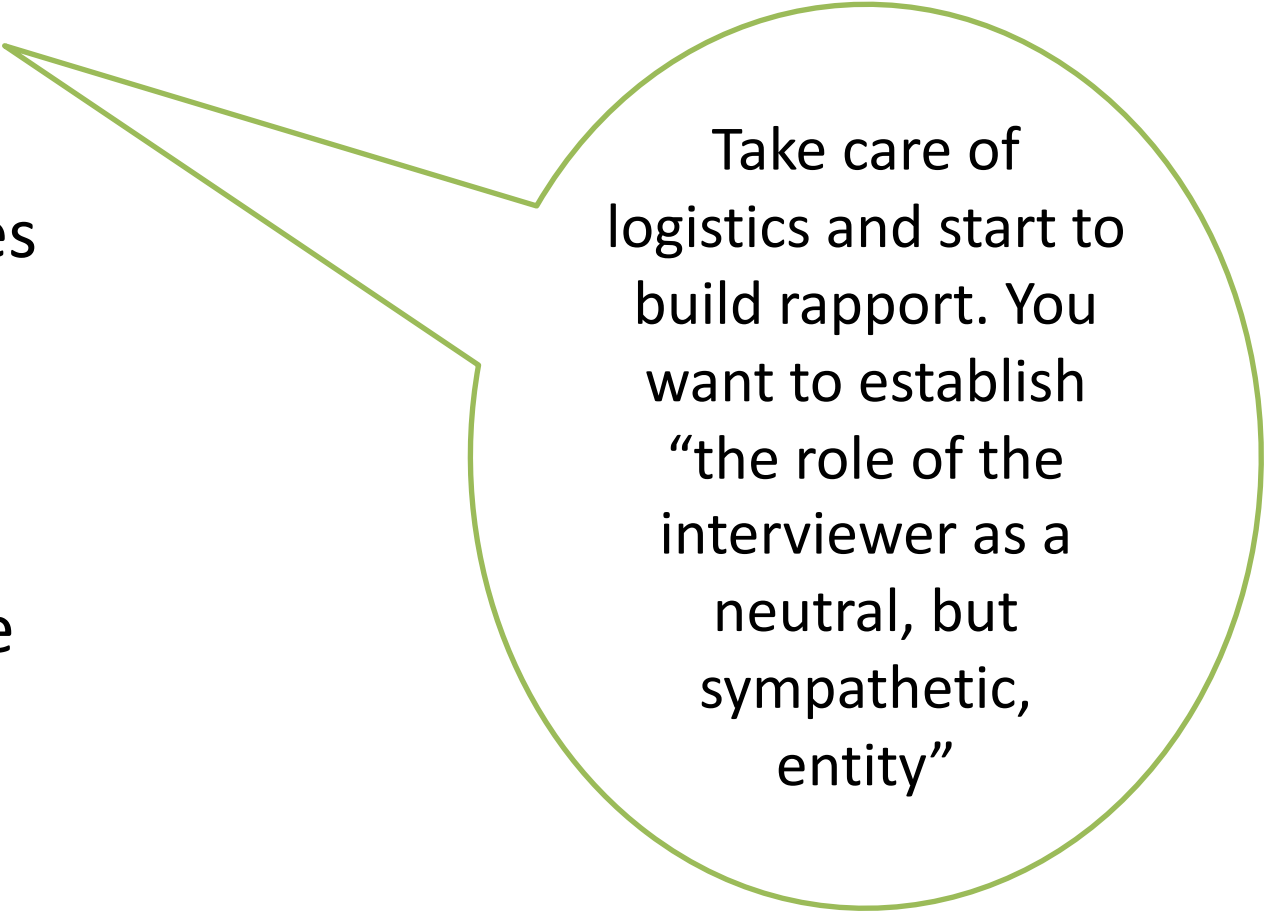


# (Not an exact science, but...)

1. Introduction
2. General Issues
3. Deep Focus
4. Retrospective
5. Wrap-up

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1. Introduction
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Take care of logistics and start to build rapport. You want to establish “the role of the interviewer as a neutral, but sympathetic, entity”

# (Not an exact science, but...)

1. Introduction
2. General Issues
3. Deep Focus
4. Retrospective
5. Wrap-up

Continue building rapport.

“Asking these kinds of questions early prevents the assumptions of the [research] team from skewing people’s perceptions”

# (Not an exact science, but...)

1. Introduction
2. General Issues
3. Deep Focus
4. Retrospective
5. Wrap-up

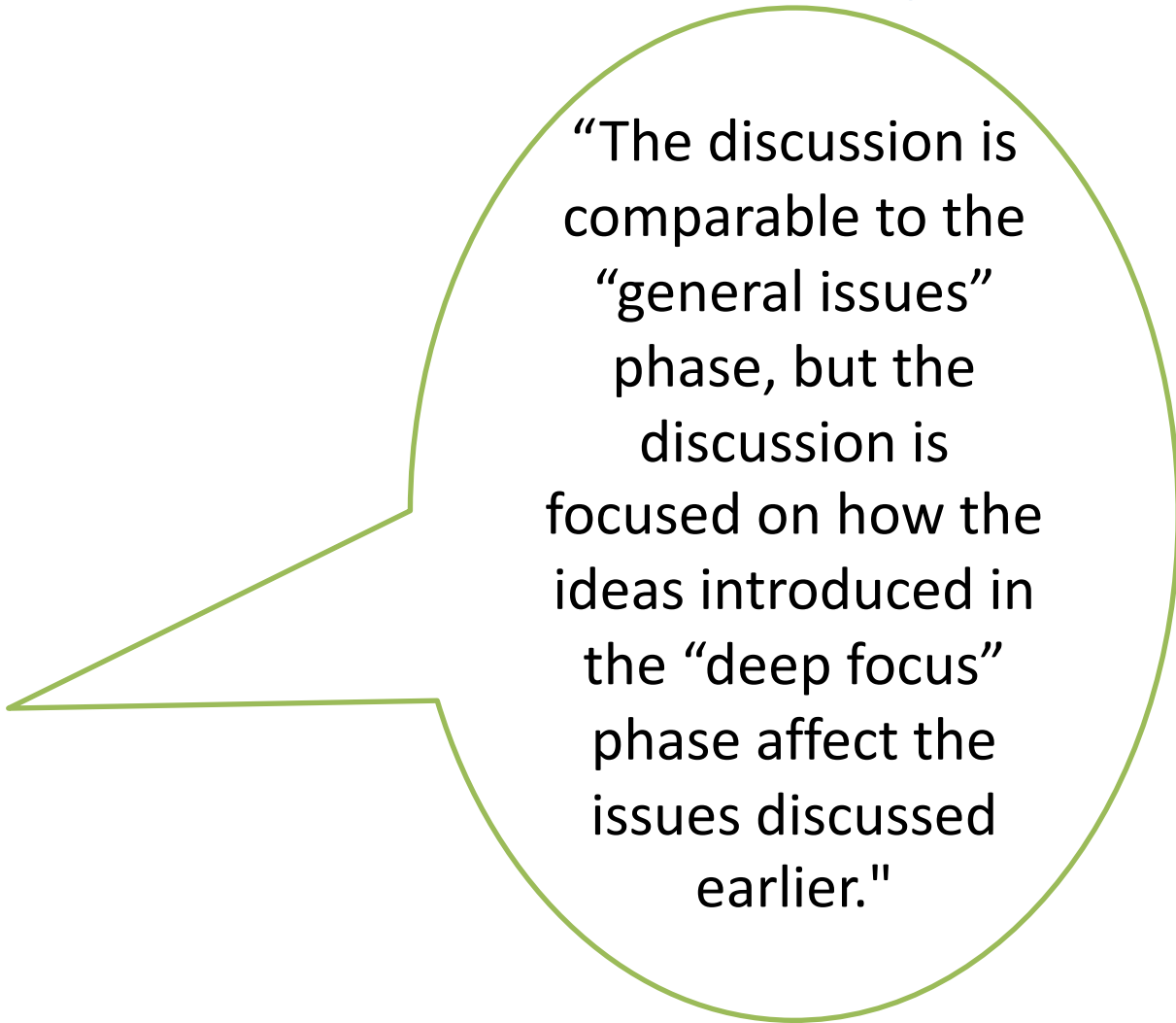


The guts of what  
your interview is  
getting at.



# (Not an exact science, but...)

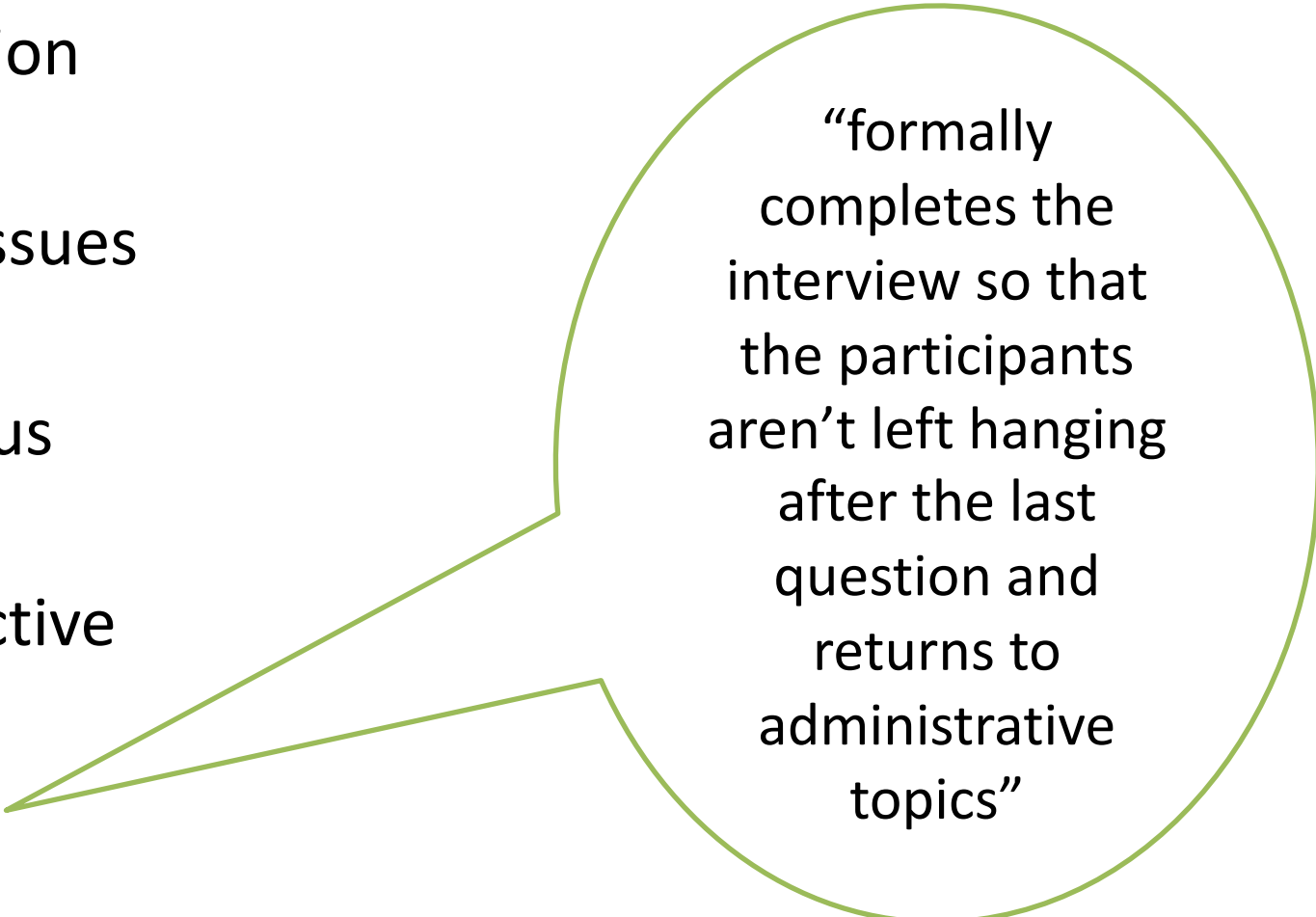
1. Introduction
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“The discussion is comparable to the “general issues” phase, but the discussion is focused on how the ideas introduced in the “deep focus” phase affect the issues discussed earlier.”

# (Not an exact science, but...)

1. Introduction
2. General Issues
3. Deep Focus
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“formally completes the interview so that the participants aren’t left hanging after the last question and returns to administrative topics”

# A question to make fun of

*How much does your employer or his representative resort to trickery in order to defraud you of a part of your earnings?*

# How to be a neutral interviewer

“Zen aside, asking questions so as to not bias the respondent’s answer involves a lot of self-imposed distance and a rigorously critical examination of your assumptions...At first, it’s going to feel like your questions take too much energy to formulate and sound stilted.”

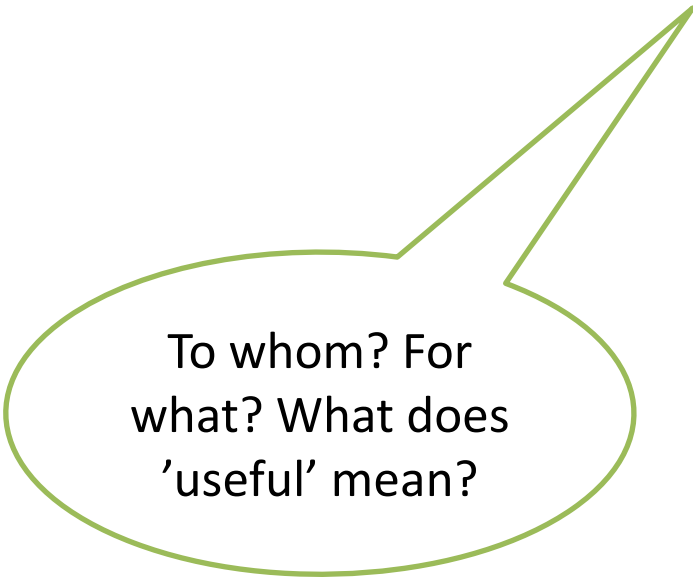
Beyond just 'neutral,' though...

What are you trying to find out?

What is a good way to ask it?

“Would this be a useful feature?”

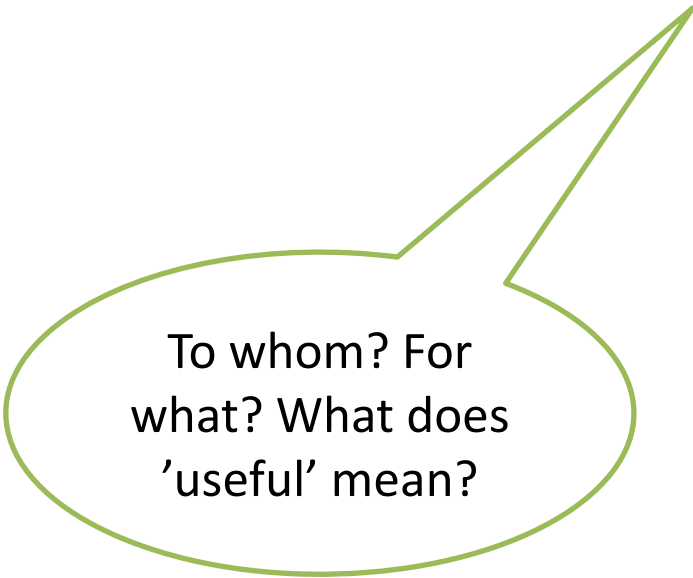
“Would this be a useful feature?”



To whom? For  
what? What does  
'useful' mean?

“Would this be a useful feature?”

“Would this feature be valuable to the work you do right now? Why or why not?”

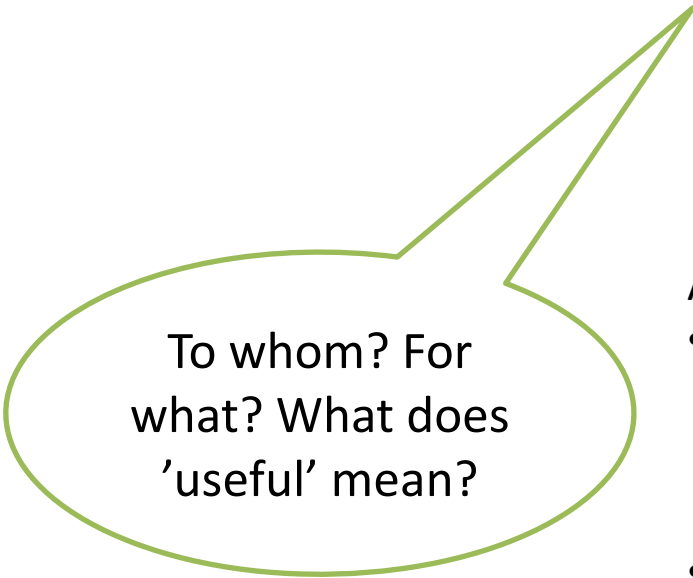


To whom? For what? What does 'useful' mean?



## “Would this be a useful feature?”

“Would this feature be valuable to the work you do right now? Why or why not?”



To whom? For what? What does 'useful' mean?

A little better, but...

- Enable new tasks?
  - Is there a reasonable expectation that they would be able to envision the benefits of this new feature?
- Streamline existing tasks?
  - Are those tasks important? To whom?
- Are we talking in grounded examples or generalities?
- Do we have reason to expect that they fully understand this “new feature,” or are we asking them to project and fill in the blanks?
- etc. etc.

“Would this be a useful feature?”

“Would this feature be valuable to the work  
...? Why or why not?”

To whom? For  
what? What does  
'useful' mean?

Depending on  
specifics, an  
interview may not  
even be a valid way  
to find this out

... expectation that they  
... the benefits of this

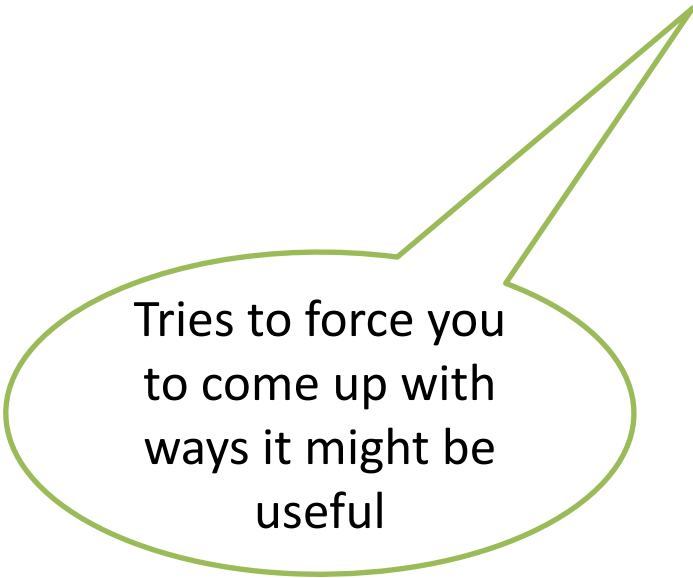
...? To whom?  
... samples or

... generalities:

- Do we have reason to expect that they fully understand this “new feature,” or are we asking them to project and fill in the blanks?
- etc. etc.

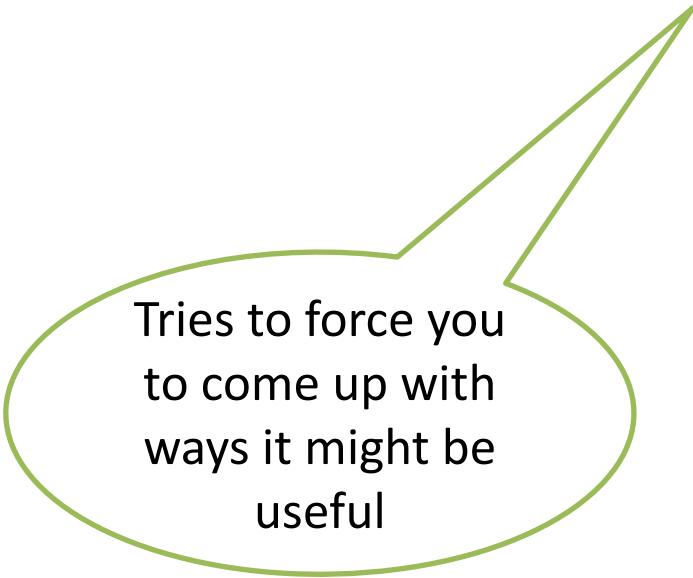
“How would X be useful to you in school or at work?”

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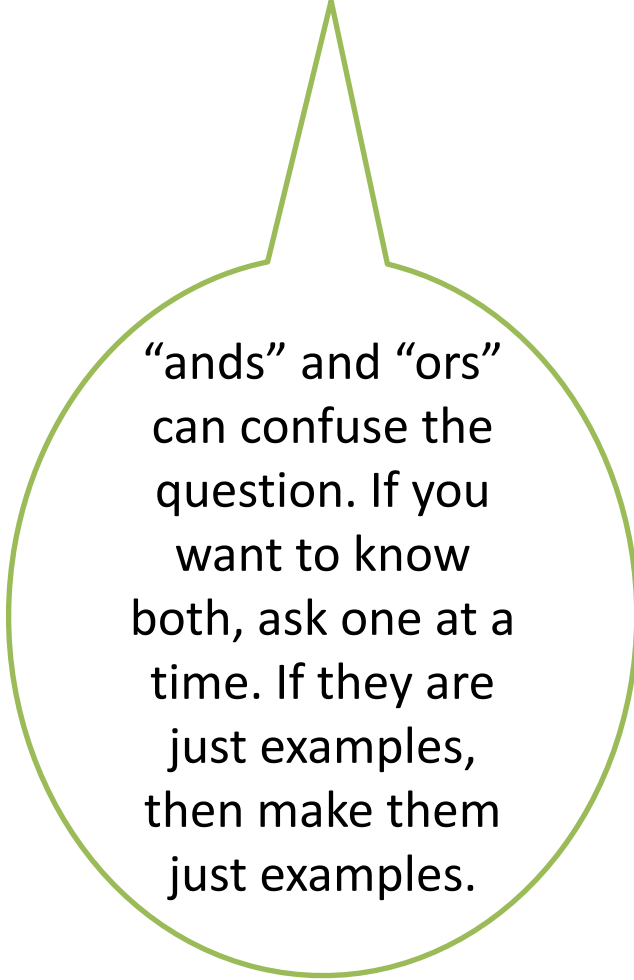


Tries to force you  
to come up with  
ways it might be  
useful

“How would X be useful to you in school or at work?”



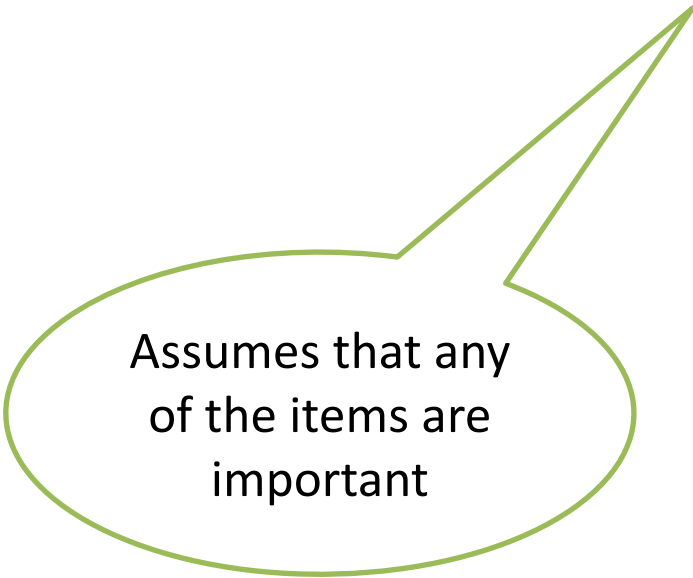
Tries to force you to come up with ways it might be useful



“ands” and “ors” can confuse the question. If you want to know both, ask one at a time. If they are just examples, then make them just examples.

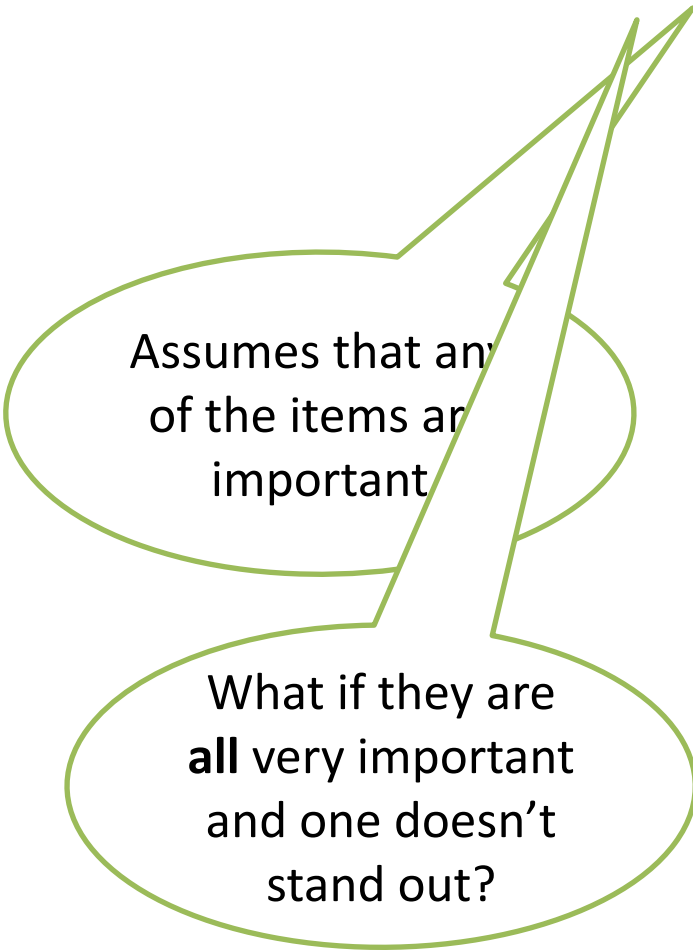
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Assumes that any  
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What if they are  
**all** very important  
and one doesn't  
stand out?



“Which item from the following list is most important to you?”

Assumes that any  
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What if they are  
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stand out?

Doesn't let you  
find out about  
related items  
unless you ask  
elsewhere, e.g.:  
Are there items  
that you feel  
should have been  
included in that  
list...

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Assumes that any  
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What if they are  
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“Why?” ← Play to  
an interview's  
strength

Doesn't let you  
find out about  
related items  
unless you ask  
elsewhere, e.g.:  
Are there items  
that you feel  
should have been  
included in that  
list...

# General Useful Follow-up Questions Include...

- “What do you mean by that?”
- “Why do you say that?”
- “Why?”
- “Could you tell me more?”
- “What do you mean when you say ‘X’?”
- “Could you tell me more about what you mean by ‘X’?”

What if you feel that they've  
already answered a question  
ahead of your asking it?

What if you feel that they've already answered a question ahead of your asking it?

- “You’ve already talked about this some, but if you have anything to add...”

# Terms and Definitions

- When using jargon, make sure that you clearly define it first.
- Whenever possible, use the participant's definition of a word / word for a definition (even if it's not how you use it), but make sure that you understand what that definition/word is first (which may mean asking the participant about it).

# Ways to Listen

- Not speaking (squeeze hands together or take a sip of water)
- Neutral cues
  - “mm-hm”
  - Nodding
  - Smiling

# Other Body Language Issues

- Posture (e.g., leaning in)
- Positioning of seating (especially with multiple researchers)



# Multiple Interviewers

- Often, two people conduct interviews—one asking questions, and one taking notes.
- Introduce everyone involved to the interview participant at the beginning of the interview.

# All other things being equal, for the researcher...

- **OK:** you can make quick notes during the interview and reserve time immediately after for a “braindump”

- 

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# All other things being equal, for the researcher...

- **OK:** you can make quick notes during the interview and reserve time immediately after for a “braindump”
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- **Even better:** an audio recording for exact verbiage (and tone!)
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- **OK:** you can make quick notes during the interview and reserve time immediately after for a “braindump”
- **Better:** a second researcher to take notes while you’re running the interview
- **Even better:** an audio recording for exact verbiage (and tone!)
- **Best:** having a video recording (to include body language cues)

# All other things being equal, for the participant...

- Generally speaking, go for the least intrusive form of recording

# The (Study-Dependent) Balancing Act

- How logistically complicated would recording be?
- Would recording make some participants either too uncomfortable to participate or make them self-censor?
- How important for your planned analysis are exact records of what was said/done (vs. e.g. researcher notes)?

# A note

- If both you and your participants are finding your interviews boring, you have a problem.
- Don't persist with a script that doesn't work. This assignment – and every research interview pilot, to some extent – is an opportunity to learn and improve.



Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “We’ve encountered different definitions of  $X$ . How would you define  $X$ ?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Some people say that they feel [one end of spectrum]. Other people say that they feel [other end of spectrum]. How would you describe how you feel about X?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “What, if anything, ...?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “If we were to make a change to X to.....is there a change that you would suggest?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “This is an excerpt from X. What is your reaction?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Let’s say that it has been decided to do X. As much as you are aware of the whole process, describe what happens from start to finish.”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Would you say that there are particular strengths to....?”



# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Do you have horror stories or cautionary tales about X?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “This is a diagram that is representative of X. Could you please indicate where....Why?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Can you think of a specific time in the last [time period] where...”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “What was the motivation/thought process behind...”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “What factors do you consider when making this decision?...Which of these factors do you consider to be the most important? Why?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Would you rather (X or Y)....Why?”

# Some examples of ways to phrase questions to get you thinking about options

- “Is there anything else you haven’t mentioned that you’ve done to...”