

QUESTION TYPES

Qualitative interviews focus on developing an understanding for your interview-partner and on gaining meaningful actionable insights. Utilizing different question types helps you build a relationship with your interview partner and allows a conversation to develop.

Recommended Questioning Techniques

Open/non-structured question

- Answer can be openly phrased
- Suitable for opening or intensifying conversation
- There is the danger of going off topic/losing focus
- Encourages the interviewee to tell stories

"What are your thoughts on your company culture?"

Probing question

- Aims at receiving more detailed information on a given issue
- Suitable for gaining clarification to ensure you have the whole story and that you understand it thoroughly
- Shows interest in needs and desires and helps to avoid misunderstandings
- Should be used sparingly so the interviewee won't feel like being put on the spot too much

"What exactly do you mean by 'too much manual work'?"

Confrontational question

- Meant to verify/scrutinize a previous statement
- Can help identify and dissolve contradictions

- It should be made clear that the aim of this question is to better understand, not to test, the interviewee

"Earlier you said you liked working here but you also mentioned that you are not happy with the company culture. Could you please elaborate?"

Reflective question

- Also called an "echo question"
- Aims at diving deeper into a topic that has previously been discussed
- Can be useful to regain focus in the conversation or identify meaningful insights

"Let's return to communication within your team - what other thoughts do you have on the matter?"

Directing question

- Guides conversation back to the topic and helps to regain focus

"That is an interesting point but shouldn't we return to the original topic?"

Closed/structured/decision question

- Answer can only be yes or no
- Quick, targeted collection of information, conversation won't go off track
- Not very suitable for opening up a conversation, there is the danger of pseudo-precise answers
- Can help structure the conversation but should be used sparingly

"Do you like working in your current position?"

Unsuitable Questioning Techniques

Leading Question

- Directly implies an answer and is not suitable for problem solving

"You do consider questions from colleagues annoying, correct?"

Stacked Question

- Several questions at once overwhelm interviewee and do not help to collect precise answers

"How do you feel about open space offices? Would you prefer an office of your own or would you like to be able to communicate more? And what room set up do you think makes sense to enhance collaboration?"

Surprise questions

- Unexpected topics/elements that can overwhelm the interviewee
- Should be used with care so the interviewee does not feel provoked

"Why don't you ever want to listen to your colleagues' advice?"