# Interview

The purpose of an interview is to understand how people use tools, digital or physical, in their activities. Interview results are then used as the basis for the creation of new systems. It is tempting to start an interview with general questions like "tell me about your work. "But the result is often very general or very vague, and not very useful.

People tend to respond in a style similar to that used when posing the question: if your questions are vague, the answers will be vague (and not very useful). If your questions drive the person interviewed to provide specific examples, you will have more chances of finding useful information. It's up to you, not the interviewee, to then generalize your findings.

Questions can be categorized into two axes or styles:
    specific – general
    directed – open

**Examples:**
    Specific Directed: What is your age?
    Specific Open: Describe a memorable incident from last week (CIT)
    General Directed: What is your opinion of this software?
    General Open: Do you have any comments?

Always start with specific questions - not with general questions!
Normally, we seek factual information, specific and directed: age, sex, occupation, level of experience. But since this is an interview, not a questionnaire, we should not lose too much time with this type of question in the beginning. (It is always possible to ask later on.) In fact, the best strategy for our goal is to ask Specific Open questions, as done in the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). We must ask questions and encourage people to tell real and concrete stories, in great detail. The advantage of an interview compared to a questionnaire is that you can ask several questions on the same subject, to get more information, and to better understand the person being interviewed and the situation.

**Variations of Specific and Open questions:**

*1. The critical incident technique:* very useful for generating unusual and memorable stories. It should ask the interviewee to recall a particular incident that took place during the last week that is surprising, amusing, or at least memorable. Ask the person to describe the incident, including what happened and why it is memorable. Usually, the interviewee gives both a clear description of what should have happened and what actually happened. Ask for the most specific details and help the interviewee to remain specific. You can also ask him/her to think of other critical incidents, especially if you are aware of such events that have taken place and that have been described to you by others.  If the person has trouble finding a critical incident, it is possible to ask them to describe a memorable event.

*2. Specific Moment:* very useful for understanding everyday life. Ask the interviewee to describe events that took place at a specific date and time, for example, last Tuesday at 11am. Even if nothing memorable happened that day, the interviewee will tend to explain a being a "typical" day, with a number of "typical" difficulties. Often

this leads interviewees to continue by describing other interesting examples and speak of other types of difficulties they may encounter in a typical day.

*3. Specific object or software:* useful for identifying small critical incidents and "Normal" use. It must be observed when the interviewee is currently using the software or the object to conduct a real task. You must insist that you are interested in problematic or atypical situations. Your goal is to detect problems when they occur, rather than remember them afterwards. In this type of interview, you have to look and understand each action/feedback and not be satisfied with a general explanation from your interviewee. This is not to situation where the interviewee is a teacher who explains to you how the system works, but a situation where you are the observer of someone currently using the system in a typical way. You can also take advantage of the situation to indicate a specific object, related to the topic of the interview, and ask what it is, what is its history, its present and future use, etc.

After asking several specific questions, directed or open, you can ask more general questions. Normally, interviewees continue to answer with details and concrete stories. It's only at the end of an interview you can ask their general opinion.

*Preparation:* Prepare your questions in advance, and have them be of different styles. Always start by specific questions. General questions can be asked at the end of the interview. You must include at least one question with the critical incident technique.

*Procedure:* Introduce yourself and ask the interviewee if you can ask some questions about their use of a system or activity. Explain who you are, why you do the interview, and how the results will be used later. Ask questions and take notes.

If you shoot a video, ask the permission of the interviewee in advance. If the answer is no, do not insist and do not shoot. If it is yes, before starting the interview, film a title with the name of the interviewee, the subject of the interview and the date (e.g. on a piece of paper). Then shoot an overview shot of the environment to show the situation and context of the interview. Pause, zoom to the desired level for the interview, often over the shoulder of the interviewee to take his perspective in relation to what he says. When all is ready, start the interview with a specific question. Try to avoid zooms and large camera movements during the interview.

For each interview, include:
- Your Name
- Your Group
- Information about the person you interviewed
  (Profession, gender, age, etc, but not the name)
- Where you did the interview
- Each question and answer (At least five questions, maximum 10).

You can hand in the results of these interviews as per your assignment during the class (remember, 2 is needed more are better). The interview needs to be typed.

# Interview Exercise:

Interviewer: _____Group: _____

Interviewed:_____ Age (approximate)_____

Location of interview:_____

Date /Time_____

Other Details: _____

Note each question and answer. (Enter the results on computer)

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