



# IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS *101*

**A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS**

# THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW (IDI) IS A CORNERSTONE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.

**It allows you to dive beneath the surface of consumer opinions and behaviors. It is an effective tool for getting a richer, deeper picture than surveys can provide.**

Why are IDIs powerful **tools for market researchers**, user experience (UX) researchers, and consumer insights professionals?

## HERE'S THE SHORT VERSION:

- IDIs help you understand the motivations, emotions, and reasoning behind consumer choices.
- People aren't simple, and neither are their needs. IDIs let you understand the nuances and contradictions.
- Sometimes, the most groundbreaking discoveries lie in the details and off-hand comments that wouldn't surface in a standard survey.

Ready to master the art of IDIs? Let's explore everything you need to know to use them effectively.

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# UNDERSTANDING IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

01

**An in-depth interview is a one-on-one conversation with a research participant, guided by a skilled interviewer or moderator, that aims to explore their unique perspectives on a specific topic.**

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF IDIs

**OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:** Instead of giving multiple-choice options, IDIs prompt participants to provide detailed responses in their own words.

**FLEXIBILITY:** Unlike surveys, the order of questions and even the topics can adapt to the flow of the conversation.

**DEPTH:** The focus is on digging into the "why" and "how" behind a participant's beliefs or actions

## HOW DO IDIs DIFFER FROM OTHER QUALITATIVE METHODS?

While they all uncover rich insights, in-depth interviews stand apart from other qualitative methods in several ways:

### FOCUS GROUPS

These involve multiple participants interacting, whereas IDIs are one-on-one. **Focus groups** are great for understanding group dynamics, while IDIs excel at revealing individual thoughts.

### ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION

This involves observing participants in their natural settings, whereas IDIs are structured conversations. Observation focuses on behavior whereas IDIs discover motivations.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS

In this method, researchers analyze existing text, images, or videos from sources like social media posts and customer support transcripts to identify themes and patterns. IDIs, on the other hand, generate new, primary data through conversation.

### CASE STUDIES

These offer an in-depth examination of a particular individual, group, or event. IDIs can be a component of a larger case study, providing insightful quotes and perspectives.

# THE RELEVANCE OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

02

**IDIs are especially relevant in scenarios where the depth and detail of individual perspectives are crucial.**

## THESE INCLUDE:

**EXPLORATORY RESEARCH:** At the early stages of product development or market entry, where understanding the target audience's needs, preferences, and pain points is essential.

**COMPLEX TOPICS:** When the subject matter involves sensitive issues, personal experiences, or sophisticated products, IDIs allow a safe space to explore these in depth.

**USER EXPERIENCE AND USABILITY STUDIES:** To get detailed feedback on product interfaces, user journeys, or service touchpoints, where nuances in user behavior and preferences can significantly impact design decisions.

**BEHAVIORAL STUDIES:** In analyzing why people act certain ways, IDIs can uncover hidden motivations, beliefs, and factors influencing decisions.

In addition, IDIs can complement other qualitative and quantitative methods by providing a depth of understanding that broadens and enriches the insights gained from quantitative studies, focus groups, or ethnographic research.

## ADVANTAGES OF IDIs IN UNDERSTANDING COMPLEX BEHAVIORS AND MOTIVATIONS

**The strength of IDIs lies in their ability to dive deep into the individual psyche, offering several distinct advantages:**

**RICH, DETAILED DATA:** IDIs elicit stories and examples that bring to light the intricacies of personal experience and perspective.

**FLEXIBILITY:** The conversational nature of IDIs allows researchers to probe further into interesting or unexpected responses, adapting their approach as the interview unfolds.

**CONTEXTUAL UNDERSTANDING:** By focusing on individuals, IDIs provide context to behaviors and decisions, revealing the layers and contradictions that broader surveys may overlook.

**EMOTIONAL INSIGHTS:** They are particularly effective in capturing emotions and the rationale behind behaviors, clarifying how and why decisions are made.



## CHALLENGES WITH USING IDIs FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Despite their advantages, IDIs come with a set of challenges that researchers must navigate:

**TIME AND RESOURCE INTENSIVE:** Conducting and analyzing IDIs requires significant time and resources. Each interview can last up to an hour or more, not including analysis and synthesis of the data. Analyzing in-depth interviews without the help of AI takes up to 5 hours. With AI, it takes 14 minutes. We demonstrated this in our [AI vs Humans webinar](#).

**RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION BIAS:** Finding and choosing research participants willing and able to provide deep insights can be challenging. There's also a risk of bias in selecting participants who may not represent the broader target audience. For a more balanced approach, you can choose willing and able participants from Voxpopme's [global respondent community](#) or even build your own.

**INTERPRETATION BIAS:** The qualitative nature of IDIs means that the analysis is subjective. The researcher's perspectives and preconceptions can influence the interpretation of the data. AI analysis, however, can be robotic — with minimal bias.

**SCALABILITY:** Given their depth, IDIs are not scalable in the same way as quantitative methods. Drawing statistically significant conclusions from IDIs alone can be problematic.

To address these challenges, researchers must carefully plan their IDI studies, ensuring that they complement these insights with other methods to paint a comprehensive picture of their research subjects.

Properly conducted IDIs are an invaluable tool in the [qualitative researcher's toolkit](#), providing depth, nuance, and insight into the complex tapestry of human behavior and motivation.

# HOW TO CONDUCT IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS: A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

03

Conducting in-depth interviews (IDIs) requires meticulous planning and execution. Here's a detailed, step-by-step guide to conducting IDIs:

## STEP 1: PREPARE FOR AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

This involves several critical steps, from selecting participants to setting clear objectives and handling logistical aspects. Let's delve into these foundational steps.

1

### DEFINE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Begin by articulating what you aim to achieve with the IDIs. This clarity will guide every subsequent step, from formulating questions to selecting participants. Whether you're exploring user satisfaction, understanding consumer behavior, or testing product concepts, your goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

Then, develop specific questions that the IDIs are designed to answer. These questions should stem from your objectives and guide the direction of the interviews. They will form the backbone of your discussion guide, ensuring that your discussions remain focused and productive.

2

### DETERMINE PARTICIPANT CRITERIA

Identify the key characteristics of the individuals you wish to interview. These may include age, gender, profession, or other demographics relevant to your study. Understanding who your target participants are will help you tailor your respondent recruitment strategy and ensure that your findings are relevant to your research objectives.

Beyond basic demographics, establish specific criteria that participants must meet to be included in your study. This could relate to their experiences, behaviors, or attitudes relevant to your research questions. For instance, if studying the adoption of smart home technologies, you might focus on homeowners who have purchased smart devices within the last year.

### 3

#### RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Decide on the most effective channels for finding and reaching your **target participants**. This could involve social media outreach, leveraging professional networks, using recruitment agencies, accessing **survey respondents communities**, or tapping into existing customer databases. The chosen method should align with where your target participants are most likely to be found and be responsive.

**REMEMBER:** Your participants must fully understand the purpose of the study, what their involvement will entail, and how their data will be used and protected. This includes making clear any potential risks, their right to withdraw at any time, and ensuring confidentiality.

## STEP 2: CRAFT A DISCUSSION GUIDE

A well-crafted discussion guide is a vital tool for conducting effective in-depth interviews. It serves as a roadmap for the interview, ensuring that all the key topics are covered while allowing for the natural flow of conversation.

Here's how to create an impactful discussion guide:

## Craft the Perfect Discussion Guide

Download Now



Start with the key elements of an Effective discussion guide for IDIs:

### 1

**INTRODUCTION:** Start with a brief introduction that explains the purpose of the interview and how the information will be used. This sets the stage and helps build rapport with the participant.

### 2

**WARM-UP QUESTIONS:** Include a few easy questions to make the participant comfortable. These can be general or lightly touched upon the topics of interest.



- 3 MAIN QUESTIONS:** These are the core of your guide, designed to explore the research objectives deeply. They should be open-ended to encourage detailed responses.
- 4 PROBING QUESTIONS:** Prepare a list of follow-up or probing questions to delve deeper into interesting or unclear responses. This helps uncover more nuanced insights.
- 5 CLOSING QUESTIONS:** End with questions that allow participants to add anything not covered and to reflect on the discussion. This ensures nothing valuable is missed.
- 6 THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS:** Thank the participant for their time and explain any next steps, including how and when they might expect to see the study's results (if applicable).

## Free AI Discussion Guide Tool!

Create Your's Now



While a great structure is beneficial for keeping your IDI sessions on track and productive, you shouldn't lose out on the main gain of IDIs, which is flexibility. To ensure flexibility while maintaining focus on research objectives, you should:

- 1 USE THE GUIDE AS A FRAMEWORK:** Treat the discussion guide more as a flexible framework than a strict script. This allows you to adapt to the flow of conversation while ensuring that all key areas are explored.
- 2 PRIORITIZE TOPICS:** While you should aim to cover all areas, prioritize your questions in order of importance. This ensures that if time runs short, the most critical information is gathered.
- 3 ALLOW FOR NATURAL CONVERSATION:** Encourage participants to share their thoughts freely. Be ready to explore unexpected areas if they provide valuable insights, even if it means briefly diverging from the guide.



## STEP 3: SET UP THE INTERVIEW ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which an IDI takes place can significantly influence the quality and depth of information gathered. Here's how to ensure it's conducive to a productive and comfortable interview.

### CHOOSE A VENUE

For face-to-face interviews, select a quiet, private, and comfortable place convenient for the participant. This could be a meeting room, a private area in a public space, or even the participant's home or workplace if appropriate.

For **virtual IDIs**, choose a reliable online platform you and the participant are comfortable using. Ensure it offers good audio and video quality to facilitate a smooth conversation.

## Learn more about running online IDIs with Live Interviews

Watch Now



### TECHNICAL SETUP

- Ensure all participants have the necessary equipment and software installed for online interviews. This includes a stable internet connection, a webcam, and headphones with a microphone.
- Conduct a technical check before the interview to troubleshoot any issues and ensure everything works.

### TIPS FOR CREATING A COMFORTABLE INTERVIEW ENVIRONMENT

3

**BUILD RAPPORT:** Spend the first few minutes building a rapport with the participant. A friendly, open demeanor can help make them feel at ease.

4

**MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS:** Whether in-person or online, ensure the interview space is free from distractions that could disrupt the conversation.

5

**PROVIDE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS:** Especially for virtual interviews, give clear instructions on using the online IDI platform and what to do if there are technical difficulties.

6

**ENSURE PRIVACY:** Reassure participants of their privacy, especially in sensitive topics, to help them feel secure in sharing openly.

## STEP 4: CONDUCT THE INTERVIEWS

Once the groundwork is laid, the stage is set for conducting the in-depth interviews (IDIs). The success of each session hinges on a structured approach, the adept application of interview techniques, and an understanding of the optimal session length.

### INTERVIEW STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

A well-structured interview guides the conversation through an opening, body, and closing, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the topic while making the participant feel comfortable and valued.

#### OPENING

Begin by introducing yourself and briefly explaining the purpose and the expected duration of the interview. Reiterate the participant's right to privacy and confidentiality. Start with light, warm-up questions to ease into the conversation.

#### BODY

This is the core of the interview, where the main questions are asked. Use a variety of techniques to maintain focus and gain deep insights:

#### QUESTION ORDERING:

1

**FUNNELING:** Start with broad, open-ended questions and gradually narrow to more specific topics. This approach helps participants open up and can lead to more detailed responses as the interview progresses.

2

**BUILDING MOMENTUM:** Arrange questions to gradually delve deeper into the subject matter, building momentum and encouraging participants to share more freely as they become more engaged.

3

**SENSITIVE TOPICS PLACEMENT:** Place sensitive or potentially uncomfortable questions in the latter part of the body section, once trust and rapport have been established.

Beyond asking the right questions and encouraging open and free-flowing conversation, you must get honest feedback, or else this is all wasted effort. Here's how to encourage open and honest responses:

- Clearly state that responses will be treated confidentially and, depending on the study, participants will be anonymized in the analysis.
- Emphasize that all perspectives are valuable and there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The goal is to understand, not to evaluate.
- Through active listening, neutral body language, and follow-up questions that convey curiosity, demonstrate a genuine interest in the participant's story.
- Don't frame questions in a way that suggests you're looking for a particular answer. Instead, use open-ended phrasing like "Tell me about..." or "How did that make you feel?"

- Starting with some light conversation unrelated to the research topic can help the participant feel comfortable and establish a positive connection before diving into sensitive topics.
- Sometimes, the interviewer's age, gender, or perceived social standing might influence the participant's candor. Researchers should consider this during interviewer selection and training.
- When appropriate, offering fair compensation shows the participant that their time and insights are valued, which can foster a sense of commitment to providing thoughtful answers.

## CLOSING

Summarize the key points discussed to validate the accuracy and offer the participant a chance to add anything missed. Thank them for their time and participation, and explain the next steps, including how the information will be used and any follow-up actions.

## IDEAL SESSION LENGTH

The recommended length for an IDI is between 45 to 90 minutes. This range is optimal for two major reasons:

- Interviews that are too brief may not delve deeply enough into the subject matter, missing valuable insights.
- Conversely, sessions that extend beyond 90 minutes can lead to fatigue for both the participant and the interviewer, potentially compromising the quality of the data collected.

Also, regarding the IDI session length, you can consider adapting the three-interview series (Seidman's Model) to your research objectives. **Irv Seidman's model** for qualitative research proposes conducting a series of three interviews with each participant to explore the topic comprehensively.

This approach unfolds over three distinct phases:

**FOCUSED LIFE HISTORY:** The first interview focuses on the participant's background and life experience, laying the groundwork for understanding their perspectives.

**DETAILS OF THE EXPERIENCE:** The second session delves into the participant's specific experiences related to the research topic, building on the context of the first interview.

**REFLECTION ON THE MEANING:** In the final interview, the participant is asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences and how it has influenced their views or behavior.

The benefits of this model are that it:

- Provides a comprehensive understanding of the participant's perspective, from their background to current views.
- Allows the researcher to build rapport and trust with the participant, leading to more open and honest responses.
- Facilitates a deeper exploration of the topic by examining it through the lens of the participant's

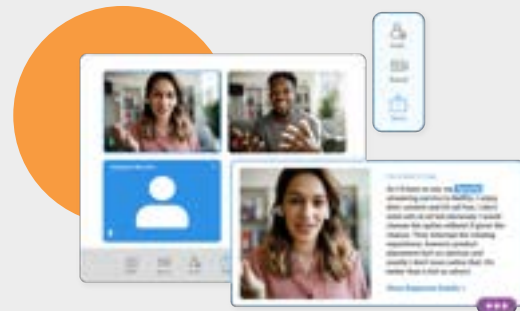
## RECORDING THE IDI SESSION

Compared to note-taking, recording captures the interview verbatim, ensuring no detail is missed. It also allows the interviewer to fully engage with the participant without the distraction of writing or typing.

Tools like Voxpopme Recorder offer an easy way to record and analyze video feedback. Mentioning specific tools can reassure participants about the security and purpose of the recording.

## Auto record, import and analyze online conversations

[Try Voxpopme Recorder Now!](#)



Remember always to obtain explicit consent before recording. Explain how the recording will be used and assure confidentiality and privacy.

## STEP 5: ANALYZE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Once the IDIs are conducted, the next crucial phase is analysis. This phase involves unpacking the collected data to extract meaningful insights. There are several approaches to analyzing IDIs, ranging from manual, traditional methods to leveraging modern AI-powered tools like Voxpopme.

### THE MANUAL/TRADITIONAL METHOD

This method involves a detailed, hands-on approach to data analysis. It typically follows these steps:

- 1 TRANSCRIPTION:** Convert audio or video recordings into written text. This step is essential for a thorough analysis, as it allows you to comb through the data word by word.
- 2 CODING:** Identify themes, patterns, and categories within the transcripts. Coding can be done deductively (based on the research questions and hypotheses) or inductively (emerging from the data).
- 3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS:** Group codes into broader themes that capture the essence of what participants shared. This step often involves iterative reading and re-reading of the data to refine themes.
- 4 INTERPRETATION:** Contextualize the findings within the research objectives, drawing connections between themes and the questions at the heart of the study.

## WITH VOXPOPME AI INSIGHTS

Voxpopme offers a streamlined, efficient approach to analyzing video feedback through AI:

- 1 AUTOMATED TRANSCRIPTION:** Voxpopme provides quick and accurate transcriptions of video interviews, saving time in the initial analysis phase.
- 2 AI-POWERED ANALYSIS:** The platform uses AI to identify key themes, sentiments, and emotions in the data, offering a high-level overview that can guide deeper analysis. Using **ChatGPT prompts for qualitative research**, you can query this rich qualitative data for insights and get responses linked to specific sections of your interview recordings.
- 3 RICH MEDIA CLIPS:** You can easily extract and compile video clips in a **showreel** that exemplifies key findings, making your results more engaging and illustrative.

## Generate consumer insights from video using ChatGPT

Try AI Insights Now!



## REPORT RESULTS

After analyzing the data, the final step is to compile and present your findings in a comprehensive report.

- 1 SUMMARIZE FINDINGS:** Start with a clear, concise summary of the key insights. This section should encapsulate the essence of what you've discovered through your IDs.
- 2 USE DIRECT QUOTES:** Incorporate direct quotes from participants to illustrate your points. These quotes add a human element to the data, making the findings more relatable and impactful. When presented as video clips, these quotes carry even more weight because a genuine human face is attached to them.
- 3 VISUAL REPRESENTATION:** Include charts, graphs, or video clips from your **Voxpopme Live Interviews sessions** to visually represent key themes and insights.
- 4 CREATE A SHOWREEL:** It's an innovative way to engage stakeholders, providing them with a vivid and compelling overview of the insights gained from your in-depth interviews.

Remember to provide actionable recommendations based on your findings. These should be directly linked to your research objectives and answer the core questions your study sought to address. Recommendations should be practical, clearly stated, and grounded in the data.



## FACE-TO-FACE VS ONLINE IDIs

The shift towards digital platforms has transformed the landscape of qualitative research, particularly in the domain of in-depth interviews.

This evolution raises questions about the effectiveness of **online IDIs** conducted via web conferencing tools compared to the traditional face-to-face approach.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE IDIs

Online IDIs offer distinct advantages, including increased accessibility and convenience for participants and researchers alike. They enable interviews with a geographically **diverse participant pool**, often resulting in a broader range of insights.

On top of that, **live online IDIs** can reduce costs and logistical complexities associated with face-to-face interviews.

### MAINTAINING QUALITY IN A VIRTUAL INTERVIEW ENVIRONMENT

The key to preserving the quality of insights obtained through online IDIs lies in the meticulous preparation and execution of the interviews.

Ensuring a stable internet connection, choosing reliable web conferencing tools, and preparing participants for the digital format are critical steps.

Building rapport in a virtual setting also demands a more conscious effort, employing strategies like engaging in small talk and using visual cues effectively. We've gone into the details of these in the above sections.



# THE DOS AND DON'TS OF CONDUCTING IDIS

05

Conducting successful IDIs requires adherence to best practices and an awareness of common pitfalls.

## THE DOS

### FOLLOW UP INSIGHTFULLY

Ask questions that build upon a participant's previous answers, exploring specific points or seeking clarification.

### ACTIVELY LISTEN

Show genuine attention to the interviewee's words with encouraging noises or brief summaries to indicate your engagement.

### BE PREPARED

Thoroughly understand your research goals and design interview questions that directly address those areas.

### PRIORITIZE THE INTERVIEWEE'S EXPERIENCE

Offer privacy assurances and focus the conversation on firsthand experience rather than your own viewpoints.

### PROVIDE STRUCTURE

Establish topics in a logical order and guide the conversation to ensure all relevant areas are covered.

## THE DON'TS

### LET DISTRACTIONS IMPEDE THE INTERVIEW

Choose a location that minimizes disruptions and allows for concentration.

### OVERLY INFLUENCE RESPONSES

Maintain a friendly but neutral demeanor to ensure the participant's answers are unfiltered and unbiased.

### INTERJECT YOUR OWN OPINIONS

Focus on gathering the participant's perspective; avoid expressing your own interpretations.

### OVERCOMPLICATE YOUR LANGUAGE.

Use clear and simple vocabulary for easy comprehension by all participants.

### RUSH TO JUDGMENT

Allow respondents to complete their thoughts before interrupting or changing topics.





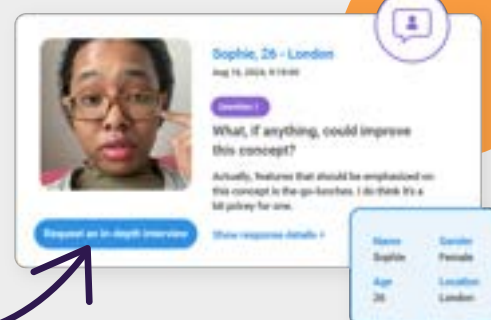
## CONCLUSION

**In-depth interviews (IDIs) are a cornerstone of qualitative research, offering deep, nuanced insights into human behaviors, motivations, and experiences. Whether conducted face-to-face or through online platforms, IDIs enable researchers to explore complex topics with the depth and detail necessary for informed decision-making.**

By adhering to best practices, embracing the unique advantages of each format, and navigating their challenges with careful planning, researchers can leverage IDIs to unlock a wealth of valuable insights.

## Launch an IDI today!

Ready, Steady, Go...



Connect & interview real people. Build richer stories. Uncover deeper insights.



# We'd love to hear from you.

Email any questions to [sales@voxpopme.com](mailto:sales@voxpopme.com)