

Suggestions for Effective Interviewing (adapted from Patton 1987)

1. Select the type of interview (or combination of types) that is most appropriate to the purposes of the evaluation. Communicate clearly what information is desired, why that information is important, and let the respondent know how the interview is progressing.
2. Remember to ask single questions and to use clear and appropriate language. Check (or summarize) occasionally to be sure you are hearing and recording the respondent's responses accurately. Avoid leading questions.
3. Listen attentively and respond appropriately to let the person know he or she is being heard.
4. Understand the difference between a depth interview and an interrogation. Qualitative evaluators conduct depth interviews; police investigators and tax auditors conduct interrogations.
5. Recognize when the respondent is not clearly answering the question and press for a full response.
6. Maintain neutrality toward the specific content of response. (You are there to collect information not to make judgments about that person.)
7. Observe while interviewing. Be aware of and sensitive to how the person is affected by and responds to different questions.
8. Maintain control of the interview.
9. Treat the person being interviewed with respect. Keep in mind that it is a privilege and responsibility to peer into another persons' experience.
10. Practice interviewing. Develop your skills.
11. An interview is not a conversation. You should not interrupt the respondent (unless you need to regain control or move the interview along), and you should not share your opinions about the questions or the person's response. You need to cover all the questions on your protocol and you need to deliver them in an order that makes sense.