



Concrete Examples and Critical Incidents

When you conduct user interviews, you want to get descriptions that are as accurate as possible. Generally, people are not good at recollecting if you give them abstract questions. There's a big difference between trying to get behind people's thought processes for the actions they take—whether mundane or not—and asking them just to give an account from a recent experience of theirs. Thus, you will get many more details if you ask them for *concrete* examples. Here are two good ways to elicit detailed and accurate descriptions from your interview participants.

Concrete Examples

If you want to understand how your interview participants normally do something, ask for concrete examples rather than an abstract overview. Here's an example of two different ways to ask questions if you want to understand how people go grocery shopping:

ABSTRACT

How do you normally go grocery shopping?

vs.

CONCRETE

Describe what you did the last time you went shopping.

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If you ask participants for concrete examples, you are likely to get many more details, especially if you ask follow-up questions about anything in a participant's description that first strikes you as vague or unclear.

Critical/Memorable Incidents

If you ask about incidents that are rich in emotional content, people are likely to remember a lot more details.

You could ask about a memorable incident—or a critical incident if you know you are mostly interested in negative examples. For example:

Tell me about a memorable incident you had when using your digital diary.

Often, people will describe the incident in a way that tells you about things that *don't* work or work *particularly well* in a design. You should also follow up with questions that allow you to follow the course of the incident and ask the participant how technology might have worked better.

When you follow up on answers, your questions will be free-form and situated, but keep in mind what you want to get out of the interview and steer your follow-up questions in that direction at all times.



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User Research – Methods and Best Practices

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User experience (UX) design requires you to understand the pains and pleasures of your users—and user research is the way in which to do just that. In that sense, it's actually the largest part of the field... meaning it's essential for you to have the relevant skills and knowledge if you want to be competing with the best. In our course [User Research – Methods and Best Practices](#), you'll learn the best practices for getting first-hand knowledge of your users, thus enabling you to design the optimal product—one that's truly relevant for your users and, subsequently, outperforms your competitors'. In the course you'll be equipped with templates that will give you pointers on how to effectively interview your users, conduct observations, and best present your findings to stakeholders. You've already downloaded one template, now take the next step and master the full range of user research techniques!

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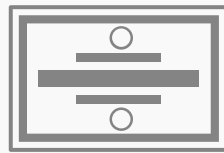
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