How to Carry out a Thematic Analysis

When you do a thematic analysis of the user interviews and other research you've conducted, you should follow the following 6 steps:

01: Familiarize Yourself with Your Data

The first step is all about getting to know your data. Go through all the data you have collected and take notes on everything that happens or is said. If you have audio or video recordings, it's often necessary to perform some type of transcription, which will allow you to work with and incorporate this form of data into your analysis.

02: Generate Initial Codes

A code is a brief description or title for what is being said or done; so, each time you note something interesting in your data, write down a code—e.g., "uses Google search" or "sorts files alphabetically". Think of each code like keywords or tags that make it easy to sift through the data later.

You may want to use colored markers or stickers to indicate which code each piece of data refers to because you'll need to collate all the data into coded groups once the coding is complete. Code for as many potentially interesting themes as possible and keep a little of the data surrounding each code to ensure you don't lose too much of the context. You can also use a digital spreadsheet to keep track of your data, codes, and themes.

03: Search for Themes

In this step, you start to sort your codes into themes. Whereas codes identify interesting information in your data, themes are broader and involve active interpretation of the codes and the data. Take a look at your list of codes and their associated extracts, and try

to collate the codes into broader themes that say something interesting about your data.

As you search for themes, you'll find that iteration is key—you will likely want to move codes back and forth to form different themes until you find the optimal groupings. Some themes might be sub-themes to others, for example, or some codes may become themes themselves if they are interesting and substantial enough. Other codes might seem redundant after several groupings, and you can place them in a temporary mixed theme.

04: Review Your Themes

Review and refine the themes you identified during step 3. Read through all the extracts related to the codes to explore if they support the theme, if there are contradictions and to see if themes overlap. If there are many contradictions within a theme or it becomes too broad, you should consider splitting the theme into several themes or moving some of the codes/extracts into an existing theme where they fit better.

Keep doing this until you feel you have a set of themes which are coherent and distinctive; then go through the same process again in relation to your entire data set.

05: Define and Name Themes

During this step, name and describe each of the themes you identified previously. Theme names should be descriptive and (if possible) engaging. In your description of the theme, don't just describe what the theme is about; also describe what is interesting about the theme and why.

As you describe the theme, identify which story the theme tells and how this story relates to other themes as well as to your overall research question.

06: Produce a Report

When you write up your results, there should always be enough information about your project and process for the reader to evaluate the quality of your research. Given that, you should write up a clear account of what you have done—both when you carried out the research and during your analysis.

Source: Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke, *Using thematic analysis in psychology, in Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Volume 3(2), 2006

Learn More About How to Use This Template?

Methods of using this template are taught in our online course Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide. Make full use of this template and learn more about design thinking by signing up for it today.

## Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide

◼◻◻ **Beginner Course**

The world's leading companies, such as Apple, Google and Samsung, are already using the design thinking approach—because they know it's the way forward when it comes to innovation and product success.

Through Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide, you will deep dive into the five phases of this paradigm-shifting approach to problem-solving—empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test. By receiving detailed guidance on problem-solving activities ranging from ideation techniques—such as brainstorming and using analogies—to ways of gathering feedback from your prototypes, you'll be able to download the other templates involved and effectively use them in your work.

Get ready to unpack, explore and master design thinking—using it to set yourself apart and unlock the next stage of your professional life.

Learn more about this course ›

How to Advance Your Career With Our Online Courses
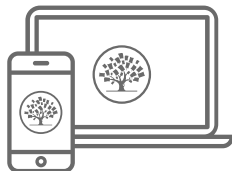
Take Online Courses by Industry Experts.

Lessons are self-paced so you'll never be late for class or miss a deadline.

Get a Course Certificate.

Your answers are graded by experts, not machines. Get an industry-recognized Course Certificate to prove your skills.

Advance Your Career.

Use your new skills in your existing job or to get a new job in UX design. Get help from our community.

About the Interaction Design Foundation

With over 66,000 alumni, the Interaction Design Foundation is the **biggest design school globally**. Industry leaders such as IBM and Adobe train their teams with our courses, and universities such as MIT and the University of Cambridge include our courses in their curricula. Our online courses are taught by industry experts and cover the entire spectrum of UX design from beginner to advanced. We give you industry-recognized course certificates to advance your career. Since 2002, we've put together the world's biggest and most **authoritative library** of open-source UX Design literature created by such noted authors as Don Norman and Clayton Christensen.

INTERACTION DESIGN
FOUNDATION