

# Practicalities and Difficulties of Conducting Observations

User observations are a great method when you need to get a thorough understanding of how your users do something. That could be the case if you are designing a software tool to be used in complicated work processes, but also when you are designing consumer products and you need to understand the role your product can play in the everyday lives of your users. Running an observation study can be complex, so we have gathered our best tips and tricks to help with the practicalities of making observations.

**When you conduct observations (for example, in contextual inquiries), there are different practicalities you need to consider:**

- Think about where you can sit or stand without getting in the way.
- If you need to follow your participants around e.g. at a workplace, consider any how you will handle any difficulties you expect to encounter.
- Ensure that you have enough battery power for equipment you need to record -or that you have the possibility of charging equipment without interrupting your observations.
- Consider if any equipment you need to leave unsupervised is safe from theft, vandalism etc.
- If you are doing observations where you are not present all the time, think about who will make sure your recording equipment is turned on and running.

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**There are also things that might make your observations difficult:**

- If you are doing observations in a domestic environment you need to consider ways to handle privacy issues.
- If you are observing anything that is commercially sensitive you have to consider how to handle anonymity.
- You should always consider if any observation can prove physically dangerous.
- If you are dealing with sensitive participants you must ensure you have the proper ethical approvals.
- Be aware that you might need to supplement your observations with other research methods, if you are observing processes or behaviors that take place on a timescale that is longer than your research or that only happen rarely.

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## User Research – Methods and Best Practices

### ■□□ Beginner course

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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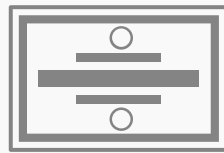
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