

Template opening script

A script is really useful, to ensure consistency across your interviews, and that everyone has been given the same information, whatever mood the interviewer might be in (energy levels can be flagging after a full day of interviews). The following is an example script that might be used prior to your research questions.

Hello, my name is (NAME) and I'm going to be doing the interview with you today. Before we start, can I get you a drink?

(If you leave them to do this, try not to leave your questions and other documents in the room where they might take a look and feel overwhelmed. If you're with them whilst making drinks, you might ask if the journey was ok, where did they park, what they thought of the weather today...)

Ok, before we start, I just need to run through an introduction, and unfortunately that means using a script so that everyone gets the information. Is that ok?

Remember to mention this when you're inviting people to interview.

As we said when we organised this, we'll be recording the audio of this session if that's ok with you. We don't use the actual audio, it just gets transcribed and we work from that, it means we can be a bit more relaxed now without me having to take notes. It is also made as anonymous as possible. Can I start recording now?

How possible will it be to anonymously refer to people, projects and various comments? Absolutely make sure people understand what the rules are for your interview, as they may prefer to hold back some things if they will be identified.

Recording from this point on means you have evidence that they've all been introduced to the project fairly and given the same information. If they say no, they don't want it audio recorded, show them you're turning it off, and instead take notes using your backup method - typed or written.

This is useful. It sets the scene, letting you know how prepared they might be. It can also help flag up any potential external influence e.g. project stakeholders asking them to respond in a certain way or give certain answers.

Ok so we're recording. Can you remind me how much we've told you about what we're doing today?

Ok that's great, thank you. So I can let you know a bit more now. Over the next few weeks we are talking to people who have been involved in the XXXX project, to help us evaluate whether it has achieved what it set out to do. We're interested in your experience, because these interviews help us understand how the project as a whole has delivered.

This is probably the most detail you'd want to give here. If you get into objectives and aims, they'll lose interest, and this should be as short an introduction as possible.

Note the wording. 'Experience' rather than picking holes in what they have or haven't done on the project. Talking about 'the project as a whole' so we're showing how their responses contribute to a bigger picture narrative, rather than just critiquing their activity.

I've got a series of questions here for us to try and get through. Obviously I'm really interested in what you have to say, but there might be times I have to pull us back on track, or move us on, if that's ok. After all, I don't want to keep you longer than we need to - we said half an hour didn't we? So that means we should finish by xx pm, is that ok?

This gives them time to suddenly remember the next meeting they have to get on to. At this stage if any circumstances mean you have less time, still try and finish at the same time or at least check with them if it's ok to over run. Remove any supplementary questions on the fly as necessary.

Ok, all done? Thank you. Then we can begin.

(Go through your questions)

How was that then?

Thank you very much for your time.

After your questions, whilst still recording, you can put your questions down and casually ask this. It allows the interviewee room to relax and summarise either what they felt about the interview process, or sometimes do their own executive summary of their response, that main point they really wanted to get across.