



# Welcome Presenters!



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# Learning Objectives



## I. The Skillful Interviewer

*Portrait of a Skillful interviewer*



## II. Issues in Research Interviewing

*Common research concerns*

*Common issues in research interviewing*

*Decision making styles and principles*



## III. Research Interviewing Strategies

*Skills and strategies for successful interactions*

*Handling refusals with grace*

*Role play!*

# The Interview

## INSTRUMENT DESIGN

Keep it as short & simple as possible

Group similar questions together

Order the questions appropriately

- Start easier, then more difficult, then easier to finish
- Start general, then get more specific
- Start with most noticeable/important
- Put the most threatening/sensitive questions in the middle

# The Interview

## INSTRUMENT DESIGN

- ❖ Single, unambiguous concept
- ❖ Suitable answer choices – only “forced” if desired
- ❖ Replicable and validated
- ❖ Clear and understandable to your target population
- ❖ Questions (& answers) are unbiased; avoid leading questions

# The Interview

YOUR TURN...

1-2-4-ALL

## Decision making in research

One reason you  
agreed to  
participate in a  
survey

One reason you  
chose NOT to  
participate in a  
survey



## The Skillful Research Interviewer

# The Interview

## A skillful interviewer is...

**Informative:** Identify yourself and state your business

**Confident:** Speak clearly and in a relaxed voice

**Competent:** Understand the project/topic/request

**Polite:** Promote respect under all circumstances

**Positive:** Be enthusiastic about the research

**Reassuring:** “Your opinions are important” and “Your data is kept confidential”

**Imaginative:** Tailors his/her approach



# The Interview

## A skillful interviewer...

Relies on experience to apply the most effective principles and techniques

Projects commitment to and belief in the importance of the study

Is willing to use techniques may convert a “Maybe” to a “Yes”

Knows common decision-making styles and compliance principles

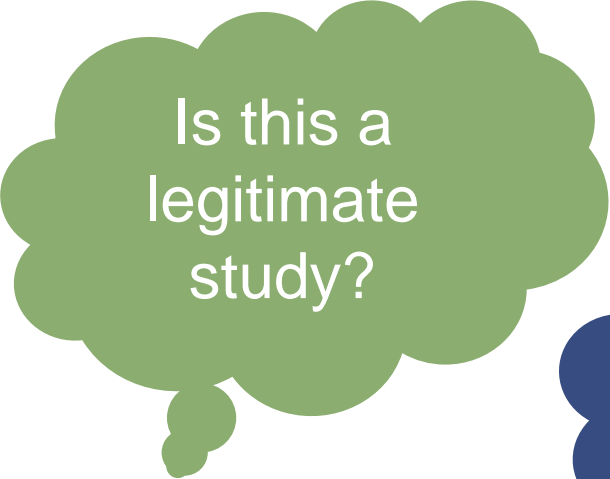
Picks up on clues given by different types of responders

# The Interview


**A skillful interviewer has a tremendous influence on respondents' decisions to be interviewed.**

# The Interview


## PLAN TO RESPOND TO COMMON RESEARCH CONCERNS



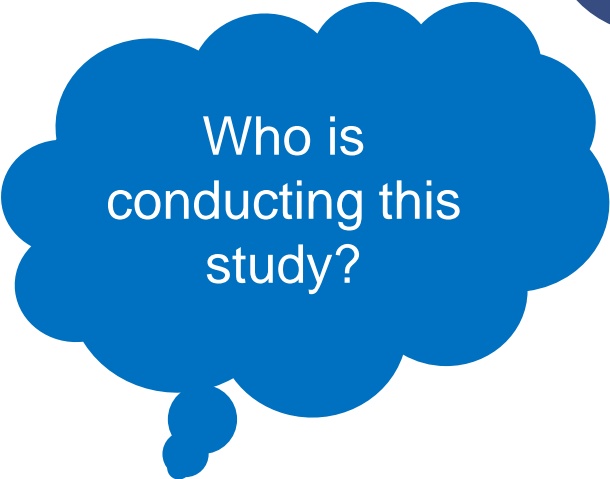
Is this a  
legitimate  
study?




How will you  
keep my  
information  
confidential?



How was my  
contact  
information  
obtained?



Who is  
conducting this  
study?




Who else can I  
speak to about  
this?

# The Interview

## Research Participant Motivations


High interest due to personal relevance, and investment in goals, procedure, topic



Altruism



I've got something to say, and my opinion is important



Listen to me, I need to give feedback



Voluntary, I can choose

# The Interview

## DECISION-MAKING STYLES

**People follow different decision processes when faced with a request.**

**Systematic**

Weigh pros and cons before deciding

**Heuristic**


Decide quickly without much thought

# The Interview

## Compliance Principles

*A technique for heuristic decision makers*


**I. Authority Principle** One should be more willing to follow suggestions of someone who is a legitimate authority. {commercial with doctor}



**II. Reciprocation Principle** In many social situations, we pay back what we received from others.




**III. Consistency Principle** We tend to stick with whatever we've already chosen.



**IV. Scarcity Principle** We are always drawn to things that are exclusive and hard to come by.



**V. Social Validation Principle** We tend to have more trust in things that are popular or endorsed by people that we trust. {putting \$\$ in a tip jar}



**VI. Liking Principle** We are more likely to comply with requests made by people we like.



# Research Interviewing Strategies

# The Interview

## RESEARCH INTERVIEWING SKILLS

**Standardized interviewing helps to mitigate two sources of error in research data.**

### Measurement error

- Measurement error is reduced by using standardized, neutral interviewing techniques and by “training” respondents to exhibit good behavior.

### Non-response error

- Non-response error is minimized by encouraging reluctant respondents to participate in the study and therefore minimize non-response to the entire survey or to specific survey items.



# The Interview

## RESEARCH INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Understand what information is being gathered

- Read the research protocol
- Research aims
- Verbalize research participant tasks
- Capture unbiased data for scientists

Uphold human subjects protections

- Adhere to IRB approval
- Differences in participant permission (consent vs. assent)
- Protect participant confidentiality

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

**ESTABLISH RAPPORT**

**KEEP A STEADY PACE**

**LISTEN ATTENTIVELY**

**FOCUS THE RESPONDENT'S  
ATTENTION ON THE  
QUESTIONS**

**READ THE QUESTIONNAIRE  
EXACTLY AS IT IS WRITTEN TO  
EACH AND EVERY PERSON  
YOU INTERVIEW**

**BE OBJECTIVE IN YOUR  
MANNER OF ASKING  
QUESTIONS**

**BE FAITHFUL AND NEUTRAL IN  
RECORDING ANSWERS**

**CLARIFY AND PROBE FOR  
APPROPRIATE RESPONSES**

**DON'T RECORD A "DON'T  
KNOW" ANSWER TOO  
QUICKLY**

**WORK TO KEEP REFUSALS  
LOW**

**ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY**

**PAY ATTENTION TO THE  
DETAILS**

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### ESTABLISH RAPPORT

- Smile - it shows on the phone
- Be positive
- Be patient
- Respect the participant's time
- Know the study
- Speak clearly
- Mind your tone, volume and pace
- Hit certain words with added emphasis
- Exude confidence to put participants at ease
- Ask questions!
- Listen

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### KEEP A STEADY PACE

- Keep a fairly rapid flow in order to focus the respondent on the questions.
  - Do not go so rapidly that the respondent doesn't have time to think about the questions.
  - If the respondent strays from the questions and starts to talk about unrelated subjects, politely, but firmly, steer her/him back to the questionnaire.
  - Tell her/him that you can talk after the interview is complete.
- Allow adequate time for a response.
  - Give the respondent a moment to think about an answer before you jump in.
  - Use an 'expectant pause' to indicate you are waiting for an answer.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### LISTEN ATTENTIVELY

- Listen carefully to the information being given to you by the respondent.
  - Listen for cues the respondent is not listening to you:
    - Begins to answer the question before you have read it completely
    - Someone is talking to the respondent in the background.
  - If a respondent jumps in with an answer before you can read all the response categories you can say, “I need to read all the categories to be official.”
- Listen for cues that the respondent misunderstood the question.
- If the respondent is confused, repeat the question or probe.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### FOCUS THE RESPONDENT'S ATTENTION ON THE QUESTIONS

- Stay in control of the interview. Be friendly and personable but keep things on track.
- Discourage lengthy, unrelated conversation.
  - If the respondent starts getting off track, politely steer him/her back to the interview questions.
  - Tell the respondent you need to finish the interview before you can talk about other things and that there will be time to chat once the interview is complete.
- Minimize distractions.
  - If the TV, radio, or stereo are on so loud that you cannot hear what the respondent is saying, politely ask the respondent to turn the volume down.
  - If a baby is crying or some other situation is distracting the respondent momentarily, offer to wait a minute and then continue the interview or offer a better time to ring the respondent.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

READ THE QUESTIONNAIRE EXACTLY AS IT IS WRITTEN TO EACH AND EVERY PERSON YOU INTERVIEW

- You must read each question carefully, exactly as it is written and in the order it appears (might vary per study).
- Practice reading the questionnaire so that you sound as conversational as possible, especially the parts which seem unnatural or awkward to you.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce all of the words.
- Do not skip questions even if you feel you know the answer.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### BE OBJECTIVE IN YOUR MANNER OF ASKING QUESTIONS

- Do not interpret or explain any of the questions to the respondent unless you are instructed to do so.
- Do not comment on the answers you are given.
- Whatever you may think of a person or her/his opinion, keep it to yourself.
- Be adaptable to anyone and gracious to all.
- Speak in a nonjudgmental manner. Remain neutral.
  - Don't let anything in your words or manner express criticism, surprise, approval, or disapproval of anything said.
  - Do not use "OK," "Yes," or " Good," which imply you approve of, or agree with, the respondent's answer.
  - You CAN use neutral responses such as "I see," "uh-huh," or "I understand."



# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### BE FAITHFUL AND NEUTRAL IN RECORDING ANSWERS

- Record the respondents' answers exactly as they say them, fully and legibly.
- When the questionnaire provides the respondents' a choice of answers, record the answer they choose.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### CLARIFY FOR APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

- You must NOT create bias in respondent's answers.
- To clarify multiple choice response questions:
  - Repeat the questions and categories.
  - Ask which of two or three options come closest to the respondent's answer, "Generally speaking, which category comes closest?"
  - "The computer can only take one answer. Would you say it's closer to X or closer to Y?"
- To clarify open-ended responses:
  - Repeat the question or response.
  - Use an expectant pause.
  - Ask a neutral question, like:
    - What do you mean by that?
    - Why do you say that?
    - What are your reasons for saying that?
    - In what way was it "(repeat respondent's exact words)"?
    - How do you mean "(repeat respondent's exact words)"?

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### DON'T RECORD A “DON'T KNOW” ANSWER TOO QUICKLY

- People often say, “don't know” when stalling for time to think.
- The phrase may be an introduction to a meaningful comment, so give the respondent some time to formulate an answer.
- Try to distinguish between a “don't know” as a pause, versus a “don't know” that indicates they really don't have an answer.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### WORK TO KEEP REFUSALS LOW

- A good response rate is essential to all research projects.
- Approach people with a positive attitude and the expectation they WILL do the interview. Be polite but assertive.
- Explain the basics of the study and answer any questions regarding the study in a smooth confident manner.
- Find the words and style that are best suited to you so that you are comfortable and relaxed when you are talking to respondents.
- Don't oversell. The "tone" of selling will make some people suspicious. You are not selling a product. You are giving respondents a chance to participate in research that seeks to improve health in a variety of ways.
- Always remember: **Participation is voluntary!**
- Try to do the interview the first time you reach the respondent. Many people will agree to participate at a later time, and then will never be available when called back. However, if it is a bad time for the respondent always leave the door open for another try at a different time.
- Try not to let another member of the household refuse for the respondent.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY

- Research teams are bound by very strict confidentiality regulations (HIPAA).
- We are required by law to protect the people who participate in our research studies.
- NEVER reveal the names of participants or details of an interview to anyone outside of the research team.
- Address participants using their first name only.

# The Interview

## 12 INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

### PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS

- Record the outcome of a call correctly and completely.
- Study the disposition details so you know how to use the codes.

# The Interview

ASK THE EXPERTS

## Questions for Speakers

- ❖ What are some recommendations for preparing to ask sensitive (or “taboo”) questions?
  - Illicit drug use
  - Sexual behaviors
  - Suicidality



## Issues in Research Interviewing



# The Interview

YOUR TURN...

1-2-4-ALL

**Name three difficult issues in research  
phone calls**

# The Interview

## DIFFICULT ISSUES

Distractions

Keeping  
interest on a  
long call

Lack of interest

Lack of  
comprehension

High emotions

Over analysis

Cognitive  
impairment

Overly personal  
questions

Challenging  
behavior



## Handling Refusals

# The Interview



Listen  
for soft  
refusals

I don't have time.

I'm too busy.

I have to discuss this with my partner.

I was just leaving.

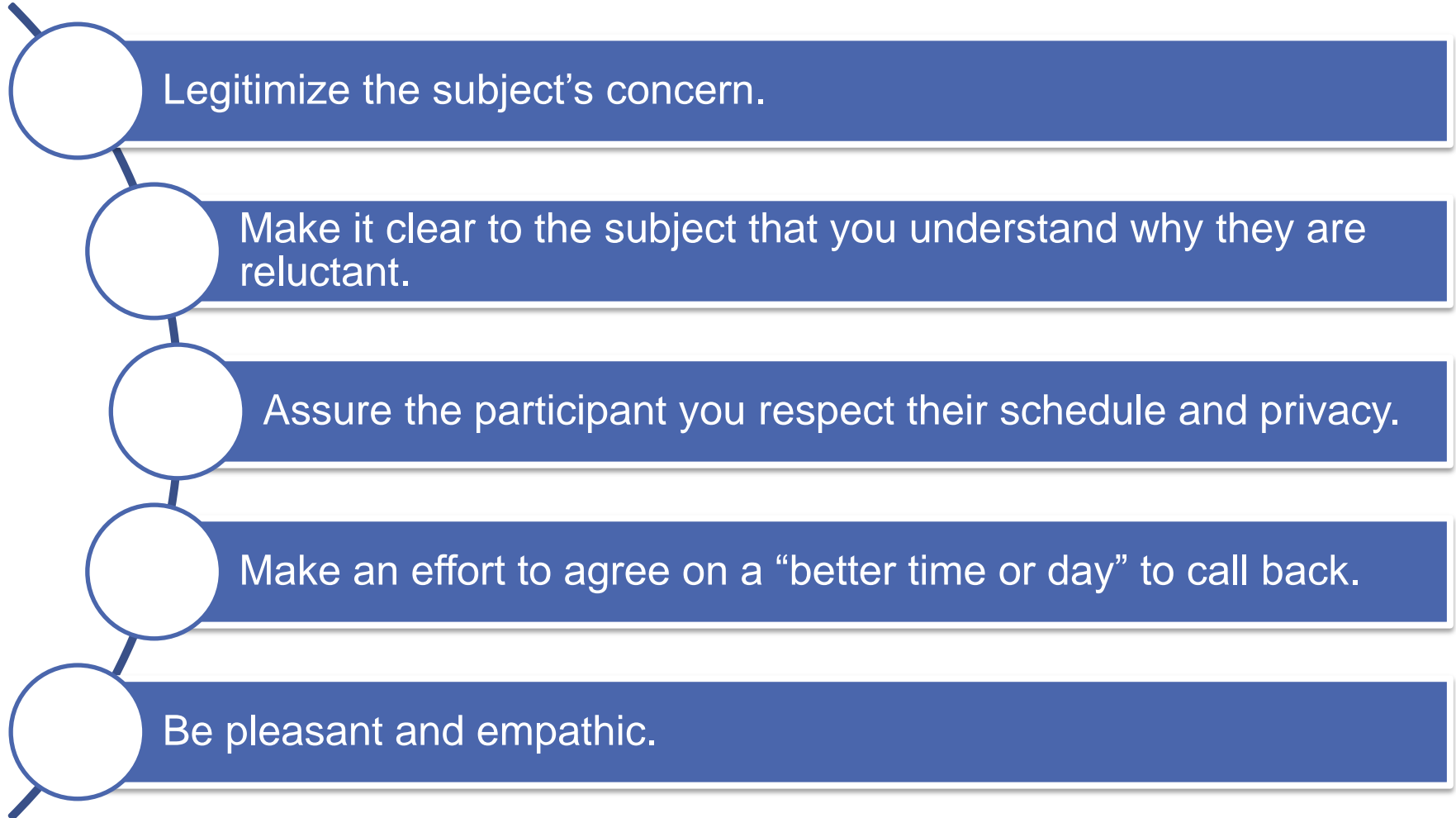
This is a very bad time for me/us.

My child/partner is ill.

Can't you see you're interrupting a meal?

# The Interview

## SKILLFUL RESPONSE TO “SOFT” REFUSALS



# The Interview

ASK THE EXPERTS

## Questions for Speakers

- ❖ What are some ways to retain participants who say they are now too busy to continue?
- ❖ How do you navigate between respecting voluntariness in research and using techniques to persuade?

# The Interview

Hear  
**HARD**  
refusals

I have no interest in this.

I don't do interviews/research.

I don't believe in this kind of questioning.

My faith disallows any contact with your organization.

My partner won't let me to answer questions by phone/about our family.

I have a terminally ill family member.

Take me/us off your list.

Don't ever call here again.

# The Interview

## SKILLFUL RESPONSE TO “HARD” REFUSALS



Assure the participant you respect their decision.

Be pleasant and empathic.

If necessary, indicate that you will not call again.

Be business-like, professional, respectful and understanding.



# The Interview

## REFLECTING ON REFUSALS

### Handling Refusals

Be objective. Ask yourself:

What time of day did I call?

What was said during the call? What was the “tone” of the interaction?

Who answered the phone?

Did you interrupt a meal, TV program, or special event?

# The Interview

## REFLECTING ON REFUSALS

### Handling Refusals

Reflect on refusals. Ask yourself:

What am I feeling?

What do I want?

What am I doing (about what I want)?

How am I behaving?

What am I avoiding?

What is the worst thing that could happen?

# The Interview

## THE CHALLENGING REFUSAL

### Handling Refusals

When a participant is rude, confrontational, disrespectful, or angry, remember:

**YOU are NOT the target.**

This person doesn't know you. You cannot know what difficulties their family may be experiencing.

Perhaps this was just a very bad day for them.  
We all have them.

**DO NOT TAKE IT PERSONALLY.**

If a participant is mistreating you, politely and respectfully end the conversation.

# The Interview – Role Play Scenarios



# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY

SCENARIO: You are calling parents of school-aged children in September, right when summer is ending, school is starting, there are many activities to do and for many, childcare is changing. People seem to be avoiding your calls more often than usual (i.e. you are getting the back-to-school brush off)

What do you do next? How can you get them to pick up the phone?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – INTRODUCTIONS & ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

SCENARIO: Prostate cancer study conducted by Group Health. Asking men to participate in a longitudinal study about Prostate cancer and their overall health. Sample is men diagnosed with prostate cancer. They will be asked to do 2, 15-minute surveys a year for 3 years. \$25 for each survey they complete.

Come up with an introduction that includes:

- \*Who you are
- \*Where you are calling from
- \*Who you are calling for
- \*Purpose of the call
- \*Voluntary & Confidential

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION


SCENARIO: You are calling to conduct a follow-up survey with someone who signed up for a program to quit smoking. You dial the number, introduce yourself and mention the program name. The person hangs up on you.

What do you do next?


# Scenario: Using the Compliance Principles

*You are calling new moms who recently gave birth about their opinions and experiences with the H1N1 vaccine. The list was provided by county birth records. You work at a major University. You are conducting a study on behalf of the State about a recent media campaign to encourage pregnant women to get vaccinated for H1N1.*


**I. Authority Principle** People respond favorably to figures of authority. (Government, University, respected Medical Facility, etc.)




**II. Reciprocation Principle** We tend to pay back what we received from others. Offer a favor or concession, and people are likely to respond in kind. (I see you are busy. I will make a note so that no one calls you until XXX.)




**III. Consistency Principle** The foot-in-the-door technique. We tend to stick with whatever we've already chosen. If you can get someone to comply with a small request, they are more likely to comply with later requests.



**IV. Scarcity Principle** More likely to comply with something that is seen as rare or scarce. "only several businesses like yours were chosen to represent your field."



**V. Social Validation Principle** If everyone is doing something, it must be a good idea. Someone shows up at your door with a petition signed by all your neighbors already (vs. a blank petition form)



**VI. Liking Principle** We are more likely to comply with requests made by people who are likeable. If the respondent finds commonality with you (similar background, attitude, interest), they will likely react more favorably.



# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: You've spoken with this participant at least 3 times and each time you call they apologize for missing their appointment and say they will do the interview next week.

What do you do next?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: You are calling local employers about the recent \$15 per hour legislation. You call the contact name listed for a business in your sample. They say “I’m too busy, I don’t have time for this.”

What do you do next?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: You are calling to conduct a survey about local healthcare programs and their experiences with them. You call and introduce yourself and the study. The Respondent says “I need to discuss this with my partner.”

What do you do next?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: You are calling to recruit someone into a study about lung cancer. You ask for the person listed on your call list. The person who answered says “This isn’t a good time. She’s very ill.”

What do you do next?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: You are calling someone who has participated in this long-term study each year for several years. You call to set up their annual interview and they say “Can’t you see you are interrupting a meal??”

What do you do next?

# The Interview

## ROLE PLAY – REFUSAL PREVENTION

SCENARIO: “Take me off your list. Don’t ever call here again.”

What do you do next?

# Takeaways



## I. The skillful Interviewer

*Portrait of a skillful interviewer*



## II. Issues in Research Interviewing

*Common research concerns*

*Common issues in research interviewing*

*Decision making styles and principles*



## III. Research Interviewing Strategies

*Skills and strategies for successful interactions*

*Handling refusals with grace*

*Role play!*

# Thank You



# Questions?

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