

PRIMARY RESEARCH (BASICS)

Primary Research (or a Primary Source) involves gathering data by means of interviews, surveys, observations, and experimentation. With Primary Research, you create the data/information through careful study (using one of the methods above) rather than reporting the work of others.

Here's how it works:

Let's say that you wanted to know more about computer gaming or "gamer culture." You have two choices: You can read some books about computer gaming, or you can ask someone about computer gaming (perhaps someone who plays games regularly on the computer). Both forms of information are reasonable, since you will learn about the topic either from the book or from a real person.

However, one is generally safer than the other and somewhat less time consuming. For example, if you ask a gamer the wrong question, you could find yourself in a contentious position with an angry person. But, if you read a book, you do not find yourself in such perilous circumstances. And, again, taking time to read a book takes less time than setting up a meeting with someone to ask questions of them.

On the other hand, some people learn much better from direct life experiences and personal sources of information than from reading books. If you find yourself more inclined to learn from others, than doing primary research might be more interesting (and possibly more productive) for you.

INTERVIEWING

WHY INTERVIEW?

Instructors often like to see that students have taken the initiative to explore topics with real experts or real subjects. Interviews are an excellent way to collect information and learn about a topic. Besides, some people learn much better talking and discussing topics with people socially or in a social context.

Additionally, while you cannot ask a book a question, a person who is being interviewed will most likely allow you to ask as many questions as they can possibly stand.

TIPS (FOR RESEARCHER AND SUBJECT SAFETY):

- * Interview people who appear safe, punctual, and honest.* Be careful not to ask questions which are too personal or which may be considered too challenging to your subject (or person being interviewed). Watch out for emotional triggers!
- * When you interview, always let someone know where you are, who you are with, and when you will return.
- * Check with your instructor to see if the topic and questions are appropriate for the interview.
- * Check with your instructor to see if there are any rules or regulations in place which forbid you from conducting informal research.

ORAL HISTORIES

WHAT ARE ORAL HISTORIES?

Oral Histories are methods of historical research which relies on firsthand accounts of historical events or of personal experiences, which are recorded and preserved through interviews and conversations with individuals who have direct knowledge or experience with specific events. We also call them Life Histories, Biographies, or Biographic Histories).

Oral Histories rely on spoken word narratives to preserve knowledge, customs, and information across generations.

Oral Histories are used by historians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, medical doctors, and others to capture personal stories, cultural practices, social phenomena and other information which may or may not be already known. One of the benefits of collecting oral histories is the ability to enlighten the researcher about the complexities of an event or an individual human experience.

Oral Histories can present several challenges. A few of these challenges include: accuracy of memories, bias (of the researcher or of the subject), interpretation of events, and interviewer influence.

HOW ARE ORAL HISTORIES COLLECTED?

Typically, oral histories are collected in a myriad of different ways. The most important method is through video or audio recording of the individual, although audio recording is the often preferred because of its portability, size, and accessibility.

Typically, a researcher (or interviewer) commits the person (or subject) to a quiet location with minimal noise and/or distractions and begins the interview/conversation. The interview may be structured or unstructured or a hybrid with some questions and open moments to allow the subject to articulate whatever they are thinking or feeling about the event or their experience.

Oftentimes, the recording is transcribed into text and prepared for storage in a public library, historical collection, or open source digital library.

Interesting Links to Oral Histories:

[Oral History at the National Archives \(US Government\)](#)

[How To Do an Oral History \(Smithsonian History\)](#)

[National Institute of Health - Oral Histories - Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum](#)

TRANSCRIPTION

WHAT IS TRANSCRIPTION

Transcription is the process of turning spoken words into written text. A person can listen to an audio recording and type out what is being said, or use special software to do it automatically. The goal is to capture every word and sound exactly as it is spoken, including pauses or laughter, so that it can be read. Transcription is important in many fields, such as law, medicine, and media, where it's necessary to have a written record of spoken information for later use.

HOW IS TRANSCRIPTION USED?

Transcription is used in many different areas. In law, transcriptions of court hearings or interviews are official records of what was said. In medicine, doctors or nurses transcribe notes about a patient's condition or treatment to keep accurate records. In the media, transcription is used to make subtitles for movies and TV shows or help people with hearing impairments. Transcription can also be helpful in research, education, and business to keep track of interviews, meetings, or lectures, making it easier to study or reference the information later.

HOW DO YOU TRANSCRIBE FROM AUDIO

To transcribe from audio, start by listening to a small part of the recording. It helps to use transcription tools or software that let you pause, rewind, and adjust the speed, so you can work more easily. Type out the words you hear, paying attention to punctuation and format. If you're unsure about a word, replay it or use clues from the conversation to figure it out. Sometimes, you may need to add timestamps or notes about the speaker's tone. The most important part is to be accurate, since you are creating a written version of the spoken words.

WAYS TO TRANSCRIBE USING TECHNOLOGY?

There are several tools available for transcribing audio, ranging from free options to paid services. Here's an overview of some popular transcription tools:

FREE TRANSCRIPTION TOOLS

1. OTranscribe: A free, open-source tool that works directly in your web browser. It offers a simple interface with keyboard controls and interactive timestamps[1].
2. Express Scribe: A popular tool for professional transcribers, available in both free and paid versions. The free version supports foot pedal control and various audio file types[1].
3. The FTW Transcriber: A downloadable tool with high-quality audio playback and automatic timestamps[1].
4. Inqscribe: A downloadable tool with customizable keyboard shortcuts and the ability to create snippets for frequently used expressions[1].
5. Transcribe: Offers both traditional typing and dictation options for transcription[1].

AI-POWERED TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

1. Transkriptor: An online service that uses AI to automatically transcribe audio and video files in over 100 languages. It offers features like summarization, translation, and rich text editing[2].
2. Restream: Provides a free, online AI audio-to-text converter supporting 15 languages. No account is required, and it offers secure data handling[3].
3. Vook.ai: A fast AI transcription service that delivers highly accurate transcriptions in minutes, though it has fewer editing features compared to some alternatives[4].

PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

1. GoTranscript: Offers both human and AI-powered transcription with high accuracy. It provides a free preview of the first few minutes and supports various file formats[4].
2. Rev: A popular service offering both automated and human transcription options[5].
3. Otter: Known for its generous free plan, which includes 300 live transcription minutes per month and three prerecorded audio or video files for transcription[5].

When choosing a transcription tool, consider factors such as accuracy requirements, turnaround time, budget, and whether you need human or AI-powered transcription. For simple tasks, free tools might suffice, while more complex or sensitive projects may require professional services.

RECORDING ORAL HISTORIES

1. Familiarize yourself with the person's background, context, and any relevant historical events. This will help you ask informed questions.
2. Ask about their preferred method of communication (in-person, phone, video) and any topics they might be uncomfortable discussing.
3. Find a quiet, comfortable space free from distractions. Good lighting can also enhance the recording quality.
4. Use a reliable recording device, whether it's a smartphone, digital recorder, or microphone. Test it beforehand to ensure it works well. Check that the recorder is on (at the beginning and after the first question). :)
5. Have a backup recording device or method in case of technical difficulties. Charge your phone or computer before you do the interview.

Structuring the Interview

6. Prepare open-ended questions that encourage storytelling. Start with broad topics and gradually delve into specifics.
7. In preparation, try to avoid yes/no questions that limit the interviewee's responses. Encourage them to share their thoughts and experiences in detail.

8. While it's good to have questions ready, allow the conversation to flow naturally. Follow interesting tangents. Note: If sensitive topics arise, be mindful of the interviewee's comfort level and boundaries.

During the Interview

9. Create a relaxed and welcoming environment (e.g., offer refreshments), ensuring privacy, and making the interviewee feel valued.

10. Start with light conversation to make the interviewee comfortable. Establish trust and ensure they feel at ease sharing their stories. Let them know when the actual interview has begun.

11. Pay attention to what they say, and ask follow-up questions based on their responses to show you're engaged. Additionally, pay attention to the interviewee's nonverbal cues, asking clarifying questions, and reflecting back on what they've said.

12. Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. If the interviewee is soft-spoken, adjust your position or microphone/device to capture their voice better.

13. Jot down important points or themes during the interview, which can help in later analysis and context.

After the Interview

14. Show appreciation for their time and stories. A thank-you note can leave a lasting positive impression.

15. Review the Recording: Listen to the interview carefully to ensure that you captured all the important information.

16. Transcribing helps preserve the story and makes it easier to analyze. Consider using transcription software/apps to speed up the process.

17. Share a copy of your transcript with the interviewee/subject. Ask them for any corrections or anything they would like to cut/retract.

18. Store the audio and transcription securely. Treat all information from the interview as confidential information. Delete any recordings after your assignment.

19. Make sure the interviewee is aware of how their story will be used and get their permission to record and share it. You can read the short blurbs on the question protocol.

20. After the interview, take some time to reflect on what you learned and how it might fit into a larger narrative.