

What might arise? An ethics checklist

In addition to our [‘Preparing for Interviews’ checklist](#), there are a number of points to consider regarding the ethical treatment and wellbeing of your participants as you approach interviews (and any participatory method).

Will the participant arrive relaxed?

Have you picked a location that is easy to get to, with parking if necessary? If they’re coming to an unusual location such as your office, is someone greeting them with a smile?

What can you do to keep them relaxed?

There may be a point where you finish the welcoming chit-chat and feel you have to ‘get down to the business’ of the interview, but try not to make this too jarring for the participant. Of course you want them to focus on the matter in hand, but they will be more open if they are calm and relaxed. The continuity of a glass of water or having biscuits to hand can help with this, offering them moments to break and think about their answer.

How well informed will they be when they arrive?

Remind yourself of how they were invited and how much they are likely to know about the evaluation. Did someone ‘tell them’ they had to attend? The opening script is the place to fill in all the gaps and answer any queries they may have about anonymity and data storage. Be prepared to answer questions and possibly negotiate terms, in addition to what is covered in your usual script.

How easy is it for them to leave, if necessary?

We have discussed the idea of 'withdrawal without prejudice' but how easy is this for them? Is your seat literally blocking their exit? Have you told them where the toilet or a break area is before they entered the room?

What is the worst case scenario?

Look at your questions and try to establish how distressed, upset or angry the participant might become, based on what you know about them and their involvement in the project. Should any of the questions be avoided for this interviewee, or worded differently? Have a concealed pack of tissues at hand if this becomes emotional for them - remember, this may be the first time they feel that they've truly been able to voice grievances regarding what may have been a long and difficult project.

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