



Running effective user sessions

Why we built this

At talabat, we believe that building product is truly a **team sport** - all of our product managers, engineers, and designers speak with users on a frequent basis. Over the years, these user sessions have helped us build the right solutions to solve meaningful problems for our users.

Prabhjeet Kaur and **Amogh Srivastava** from our Design + Research team have put together this guide to enable teams to level up their user research skills. By popular demand, we are very excited to share this with product teams outside of talabat!

We hope it is as useful to you as it has been for our teams! We look forward to hearing stories from you at research@talabat.com!

Yi-Wei Ang

Chief Product Officer | August 2022

Guide to the guide

The cards are divided into three sections to help teams prepare and run effective user sessions. We hope teams and individuals are encouraged to try out new techniques and generate compelling insights.

● **Setting the Stage**

Build a rapport with the users in the right way and set the right expectations from the start

● **Interviewing Techniques**

Use these for interrupting or answering users during research studies, without adding any bias

● **Common Mistakes to Avoid**

Quick reminders on what not to do

Tip: Refer to ↩ link to jump across sections

These techniques are not proprietary (refer to the source authors). You are not allowed to sell these cards or use them for any kind of commercial purposes.

Setting the Stage

← Interviewing Techniques

← Common Mistakes to Avoid

Setting the Stage

Non-verbal methods

How your body language can influence your conversations and findings

Checklist

1. No more than 3 members should attend the sessions so as to not overwhelm the participants or crowd the location
2. Make your interviewee comfortable (refer to icebreaker questions)
3. Ensure you are sitting at the same level as the participant (in-person sessions)
4. Nod! People get uncomfortable when they go a while speaking without any confirmation that the other side is still with them
5. Maintain eye contact

Setting the Stage

Icebreaker questions

What: These questions help get users familiar with the process and make them feel comfortable. These could be a combination of both open & closed ended questions

Try asking

- What does your typical day look like?
- Can you walk us through you day?
- What do you like to do in your free time?

Think aloud method

What: Ask your users to think out loud as they perform a set of specified tasks or are giving you a walkthrough of how they use a particular product or feature in the product. Users are asked to speak out whatever they are looking at, thinking, doing, and feeling, as they go about their task

Interviewers can say

- Don't forget to speak everything that's on your mind
- What are you doing and why?
- How do you understand the things you see?

Interviewing Techniques

← Setting the Stage

← Common Mistakes to Avoid

Interviewing Techniques

Echo technique

What: Repeating what the user said back to them but now in the form of a question (interrogatory tone). By using the exact word(s) that the user used ensures we don't bias or sway them

Example

User: I purchase till my credit limit, how do I buy when they don't increase my limit?

Interviewer: So they haven't increased your credit limit?

or

User: Can't find the search button, not sure what...

Interviewer: Not sure about?

Source author: Kara Pernice, nngroup.com

Interviewing Techniques

Boomerang technique

What: Pushing back or commenting on what the user said back to them but now in the form of a generic question

Example

User: Do I have to sign up to buy this?

Interviewer: What would you do if you were really doing this on your own?

or

What do you think?

Source author: Kara Pernice, nngroup.com

Interviewing Techniques

Columbo technique

What: As an interviewer, ask just part of a question, and trail off, rather than asking a thorough question. You need to act as if you don't fully understand and ask the user to explain

Example

User: If I click on this [pointing to screen] will I be able to place a return?

Interviewer: Ummm, you are wondering if [pause] you might [pause]

User: Yeah its not clear to me if I can place a return, it seems like...

Source: Kara Pernice, nngroup.com

Interviewing Techniques

Moments of the past

What: Taking users to a similar situation they faced in the past reveals more accurate and detailed answers as they tend to think of a specific moment in time

Avoid asking

- What goes through your mind when the online purchase failed?

Try asking

- Tell me what went through your head the last time you tried to buy something and the purchase failed?
- You just mentioned that you felt this was not easy. What made you say that?
- Can you recall a situation when you...

Interviewing Techniques

TEDW

What: TEDW is a set of phrases that can be used by interviewers to begin conversations that are more open-ended and allow for users to share stories & insights

T Tell me... or Talk me through...

E Explain to me...

D Describe to us about the...

W Walk me through...

Source: Nikki Anderson, User Research Academy

Embrace awkward silences

What: Sometimes the best answers come after a pause! Silence between talking is completely normal. Give users some time to process what you just said before jumping back into conversation or filling in words for them. Don't just keep talking to fill the silence

Example

User: So the last time I tried it, the app failed

Interviewer: *Awkward silence* [Pause for few seconds]

User: I have to restart the app! This is not the first time...

Interviewing Techniques

Open-ended questions

What: Open questions get users to talk freely, providing as much details as they want. These help keep the conversations going. These questions allow for conversations to continue and for users to dive deeper into their experiences

Avoid asking

- Do you like reading Reddit posts?
- Were you part of this group?
- Have you tried using...?

Try asking

- Tell me about your experience using Reddit?

(Framing questions like this would allow for conversations to continue and for users to dive deeper into their experiences)

Common Mistakes to Avoid

← Setting the Stage

← Interviewing Techniques

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid asking leading questions

What: These are questions that imply or suggest an answer

Avoid asking

- Why do you enjoy using the competitor app X?
- Are you looking for the search bar?

(Here, we are suggesting users 'enjoy' the app or suggesting they are looking for 'search')

Try asking

- Why do you use X product?
- What are you looking for?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid asking closed ended questions

What: These questions can be answered with a 'yes' or a 'no', or have limited set of answers

Avoid asking

- Did you experience good customer service?

Try asking

- How did you feel about our customer service?
- How would you describe your experience?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid asking people what they want

What: Focus on trying to find out user's problems and what they are trying to do. Users don't know what they want

Avoid asking

- What would you like us to do?

Try asking

- What are you trying to do?
- How will wanting this [referring to a want that user might mention] help you?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid making it personal

What: Our first instincts is to try to relate to our users and find common threads, to make us feel more connected

Example

User: The support team doesn't respond to my calls, my issues haven't been resolved

Avoid saying

- Oh, me too. I had a similar experience

Try saying

- *Nod* Mhmmm, okay
- What did you do in that situation?

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid making assumptions

What: Remember that you are not the user. Key information can be missed when we assume we know the answers and skip asking the basic questions to the users

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid rushing participants

What: Pause. Slow down your pace. Wait for them to complete. Don't interrupt. Allow users to complete their thoughts

Try to dig deeper to understand the why and how behind what users share