

# Probing Techniques for Semi-Structured Interviews<sup>1</sup>

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1. **The basic probe:** Repeat a question to get the interviewee back on track; frequently used when the interviewee is going off-tangent.
2. **The explanatory probe:** Used to get clearer understanding by completing the incomplete statements of the respondent. The interviewer asks questions like, “Can you give an example?” or “Can you explain that?”
3. **The focussed probe:** Used to get particular understandings about a topic. For example, “What type of...did you use?”
4. **The silent probe:** The interviewer maintains silence and waits for the interviewee to break the silence. This type of technique is generally used when the interviewee is taking lot of time to respond or is hesitant to respond.
5. **Drawing out:** Used when the interviewee has stopped and is not responding. The interviewer restates or rephrases the last question or topic (e.g., “So, the question was.... What else can you tell me about that?”), which helps the interviewee to start talking again.
6. **Giving ideas or suggestions:** The interviewer gives suggestions or ideas to think about. For example, “Have you thought about ....?”
7. **Mirroring or reflecting:** The interviewer says what the interviewee has just said in his own words. This helps the interviewee to think what he or she has just said.

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<sup>1</sup> Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Lowe, A. (1991). *Management research: An introduction*. London: Sage Publications