

RESEARCH

Getting smart around your challenge is crucial to success in the field.

STEPS

- 01 Once you know your design challenge, it's time to start learning about its broader context. You can bone up quickly by exploring the most recent news in the field. Use the Internet, newspapers, magazines, or journals to know what's new.
- 02 Try to find recent innovations in your particular area. They could be technological, behavioral or cultural. Understand the edge of what's possible.
- 03 Take a look at other solutions in your area. Which ones worked? Which ones didn't? Are there any that feel similar to what you might design? Any solutions that have inspired you to make one of your own?
- 04 Use your Research to get the facts and figures you need to understand the context of your challenge.

Suggested Time: 3-8 hours

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Materials Needed: Internet connection, pen, notebook, research materials

INTERVIEW

There's no better way to understand the hopes, desires, and aspirations of those you're designing for than by talking with them directly.

STEPS

- 01 No more than two research team members should attend any single interview so as to not overwhelm the participant or crowd the location. Each team member should have a clear role (i.e. interviewer, note-taker).
- 02 Come prepared with a set of questions you'd like to ask. Start by asking broad questions about the person's life, values, and habits, before asking more specific questions that relate directly to your challenge.
- 03 Make sure to write down exactly what the person says, not what you think they might mean. This process is all about hearing exactly what people are saying. If you're relying on a translator, make sure he or she understands that you want direct quotes, not the gist of what the interviewee says.
- 04 What the person says is only one data point. Be sure to observe your interviewee's body language and the context in which you're talking.

Suggested Time: 60-90 Minutes per Interview

Level of Difficulty: Moderate

Materials Needed: Pens, paper

GUIDED TOUR

Taking a Guided Tour through the home or workplace of the person you're designing for can reveal their habits and values far better than talking to them on the street.

STEPS

- 01 Arrange with someone you're designing for to get a Guided Tour of her home or workplace. Cultural and gender dynamics may come into play when you visit someone's home, so be sensitive to those issues and make sure you've got full permission before your visit.
- 02 Come with just two team members, one to ask questions and the other to take notes. Pay close attention to the space that you're visiting, the rituals you see there, what's on the walls, who uses it, and where it's located. All are key pieces of information.
- 03 Only take photos if you can get permission.
- 04 Ask lots of questions about the person's habits and space. Why does she do the things she does? Who uses the space and where are things kept or why are things organized the way that they are?

Suggested Time: 2-4 hours per observation
Level of Difficulty: Moderate
Materials Needed: Pens, paper, camera