Conducting Interviews in Qualitative Social Science Research

Types of Interviews -
- individual face-to-face (choose non-shy participants willing to share)
- telephone (not ideal but used when direct access is not possible)
- focus group (only used if time is limited, if interaction aids response, if solo participants are hesitant)

Benefits of Interviews -
- Researcher controls the line of questioning
- Historical context can be provided by interviewee

Drawbacks to be aware of -
- Researchers presence may introduce biased responses
- Responses are indirect (and can get out of context or off topic)

Tips for Formulating Questions to be Asked -
- Determine what kind of information is needed before writing questions
- keep questions open-ended, unstructured
  - tell a story about…
  - give a specific example of …
  - walk me through the process you experienced…
- ask clear questions
- ask single questions
- Use few in number (5-7)
- Memorize questions and their order (follow suggested stages):
  - 1- establish interviewee background in area of research
  - 2- details of present experiences/thoughts relevant to the topic
  - 3- discuss meaning of the current experience has for them

To Get The Information You Need -
1. Allow for expansion and details, but stay on track with questions.
2. Assure you are confident with the terminology and the background information related to your topic.
3. Use probes
   - link, challenge, acknowledge, encourage, contradict, directly question
4. Be a good listener
   - offer little advice and few questions
   - ask for details, clarification examples
   - allow for silence as participant thinks