

## User Research Methods Cheat Sheet

Research Method	Brief description	Ideal for	Typical Roles of Participants and Researchers
Design Ethnography	Approximates the immersion methods of traditional ethnography, to deeply experience and understand the user's world for design empathy and insight.	Gaining a comprehensive and empathic understanding of users.	Observational
Participant Observation	An immersive, ethnographic method for understanding situations and behaviors through the experience of membership participation in an activity, context, culture, or subculture.	Forming deep connections and empathy with the people and the things that are important to them	Observational
Fly-on-the-Wall Observation	Allows the researcher to unobtrusively gather information by looking and listening without direct participation or interference with the	Minimizing potential bias or behavioral influences that might result from engagement with users.	Observational
Behavioral Mapping	Used to systematically document location-based observations of human activity, using annotated maps, plans, video, or time-lapse photography.	Documenting readily observable characteristics, movements, and activities, including approximate ages and genders, whether people are along or with others, what they are doing, time spent at fixed locations or in transit, and the details of environmental context.	Observational
Interviews	Fundamental research method for direct contact with participants, to collect firsthand personal accounts of experiences, opinions, attitudes, and perceptions.	Collecting firsthand information, verifying and humanizing data collected using other means.	Self-reporting
Focus Groups	The dynamic created by a small group of well-chosen people, when guided by a skilled moderator, can provide deep insight into themes, patterns, and trends.	Gauging the opinions, feelings, and attitudes from a group about a product, service, or a brand in cases where the group dynamic can be beneficial for sharing experiences.	Self-reporting

Diary Studies	Guiding artifacts that allow people to conveniently and expressively convey personal details about their daily life and events to design teams	Collecting information from participants across time	Self-reporting
Cultural Probes	Provocative instruments given to participants to inspire new forms of self-understanding and communication about their lives, environments, thoughts, and interactions.	Identifying key patterns and themes that might emerge from a participant group or culture.	Self-reporting
Graffiti Wall	Provide an open canvas on which participants can freely offer their written or visual comments about an environment or system, directly in the context of use.	Environments or situations in which it may be challenging to collect information through traditional methods such as interview or observation (e.g., where respect for privacy or personal behaviors may present an ethical issue).	Self-reporting
Directed Storytelling	Allows designers to easily gather rich stories of lived experiences from participants, using thoughtful prompts and guiding and framing questions in conversation	Collecting compelling stories from participants when time or other factors prevent direct observation or longer forms of research inquiry.	Self-reporting
Surveys	A method of collecting self-reported information from people about their characteristics, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or attitudes	Efficiently collecting information from large samples of respondents in a short time frame.	Self-reporting
Contextual Inquiry	An immersive, contextual method of observing and interviewing that reveals underlying (and invisible) work structure).	Understanding communication flows, sequence of tasks, the artifacts that people use to accomplish work, the impact of the culture at work, and the impact of the physical environment on the work.	Observational Self-reporting
Personal Inventories	Allow the designer to see and understand the relevance of objects in a user's life from the participant's point of view, to inspire design themes and insight.	Understanding the role that objects play in users' lives	Observational Self-reporting