

Focus groups can be a wonderful way of gathering information from a small group.

**ADVANTAGES**

Ability to connect with participants  
Rich, descriptive data  
Flexible yet intentional

Time needed for transcription  
Unknown group dynamics  
Challenging to discuss sensitive topics

**TYPES OF QUESTIONS**

Open-ended questions designed to generate a detailed response  
Experiences and behavior  
Opinions/values  
Feelings/Perceptions  
Knowledge  
Sensory  
Background/Demographics

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

Tell us about a time when...  
Give us an example of...  
Tell us more about that.  
What was it like for you when...  
Tell us a story about...  
What was the best part of...  
What could be improved about...

**QUESTIONS TO AVOID**

Find a site that will have minimal distractions. This can greatly affect the quality of the data you collect.

(Adapted from University of North Carolina-Greensboro Student Affairs Assessment)

## **STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS**

Not everyone participates equally in a conversation, but we want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in the focus group. Here are some tips for dealing with the most common types of focus group participants.

### ***The Conversation Hog***

Try to seat dominant talkers next to the facilitator

Stop making eye contact after they talk for about 20-30 seconds

Turn body slightly away from participant and toward others

Interjecting may be necessary:

- *Thank you, Bob. Are there others of you who would like to comment on this question?*
- *Okay, that's one point of view. Does anyone feel differently?*

Remain tactful and kind, because harsh comments may inhibit sharing by others in the group

### ***The Self-Appointed Expert***

Avoid opening questions that highlight participants' levels of experience or social position

Emphasize the fact that everyone is an expert and all participants have valuable perspectives that need to be expressed

Employ the same non-verbal cues that you would with any dominant talker

### ***The Rambler***

Employ the same non-verbal cues that you would with