

Appendix B – Cognitive Interview Protocol

Introduction and Consent

- Hi! Thank you for participating in our research today.
- I am [This is my colleague () who will be taking notes for us today]
- Explanation of the session's purpose:
- We are going to be working with the Consumer Expenditure Survey, an ongoing survey that provides information about the buying habits of American consumers.
- Our purpose in meeting with you today is to have you provide feedback on the survey and learn about how you think about your household's expenses. We are not here to evaluate you, we are looking to improve the survey, so there are no right or wrong answers.
- Show consent information on screen

- We estimate the session will last up to 60 minutes. If you have any comments regarding this estimate or any other aspect of this study, send them to BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov.
 - Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time.
 - The Bureau of Labor Statistics is conducting this voluntary study under OMB No. 1220-0141, which expires on July 31, 2027. Without this currently approved number, we could not conduct this research. Your responses are also protected by law:

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics, its employees, agents, and partner statistical agencies, will use the information you provide for statistical purposes only and will hold the information in confidence to the full extent permitted by law. During this research you may be video recorded or you may be observed. If you do not wish to be recorded, you still may participate in this research. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (44 U.S.C. 3572) and other applicable Federal laws, your responses will not be disclosed in identifiable form without your informed consent. Per the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, Federal information systems are protected from malicious activities through cybersecurity screening of transmitted data.

- In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 as amended (5 U.S.C. 552a), this study is being conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), under the authority of 29 U.S.C.2. Your voluntary participation is important to the success of this study and will enable the BLS to better understand the behavioral and psychological processes of individuals, as they reflect on the accuracy of BLS information collections. The information will only be used by and disclosed to BLS personnel and contractors who need the information for activities related to improving BLS information collection. Information on routine uses can be found in the system of records notice, DOL/BLS – 14, BLS Behavioral Science Research Laboratory Project Files (81 FR 47418).

- Confirm contact information for gift card

- This is a survey about household spending. But if you didn't pay for the things that we ask you about that's OK! We ask the same topics of everybody so some of the questions may not apply to your household. Feel

free to say “no” that your household hasn’t spent money on things or that you “don’t know” what something is – that will not affect your participation in the study.

Diary Placement

The Consumer Expenditure Survey is about understanding how US households spend their money. We provide our respondents with a diary for a week so they can keep track of the daily expenses of their household– eating out, groceries, household shopping, that kind of thing. Anything that anyone in the household pays for – from as small as the purchase of a few bananas at the grocery store to as big as your monthly rent or mortgage payment.

For today, we are focused on recording food expenses in the diary, you don’t need to consider any other expenses for the diary – just focus on the food expenses.

First let’s start by having you take a look at the diary itself and what your impressions of it are.
Show front cover, “General Instructions” flap, “How to Fill Out Your Diary” flap only

What are your impressions of these instructions?
Did you see anything related to how to record food expenses?

Now take a look at the Examples page.
Show both “Examples” pages.

What did you think of those pages?
Did you see anything related to how to record food expenses?
Is that what you expected to see, based on what you read in the instructions, or was anything a surprise to you?

Let’s take a closer look at the two food categories. Take a look at the column headers on the Examples page for Food and Drink for Home Consumption. Tell me what each of those mean to you, in your own words.

Is there anything unclear to you on this form?
And now take a look at the column headers on the Examples page for Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home. Tell me what each of those mean to you.

Is there anything unclear to you on this form?

Diary Entry

Ok, great let’s move on to recording some of your own recent food expenses into the diary. I’m sharing the diary on my screen so just tell me where to point and click and what to type in. Try to be really specific – I’m going to do my best not to assume what you want to do, so you’ll have to be really detailed.

Ok, have you had any food-related expenses today?
If no: Think back to the most recent food-related expense you had. Which page should I go to?

If yes: Let's start with that. Which page should I go to?

Have the participant report several expenses in either the Food for Home or Meals Away categories. Enter expenses as the participant instructs.

If the participant has not entered a Meals Away expense after 5 minutes of diary entry:

Alright, let's try to get some experience with the other category – Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home. Do you have any recent expenses that you would put here? Let's enter a few of those. Enter expenses as the participant instructs.

Fictional Diary Entry Task

Ok thanks. Now I would like for you to enter some fictional expenses, some made-up expenses. This will help us to see how you would fill out the diary in a range of scenarios including ones that you didn't happen to report so far.

Let's do an example where you dined out at a nice restaurant for a special occasion. What's a restaurant that's nearby to you? Ok, let's record an expense in the diary – you went to [FILL RESTAURANT NAME]. Go ahead and fill it out as if it was a real thing you did. *Enter expenses as the participant instructs.*

Let's do an example now where you were out and about and you stopped to get a small bite to eat. What's a place where you might do that? Ok, let's record an expense in the diary – you went to [FILL NAME]. Go ahead and fill it out as if it was a real thing you did. *Enter expenses as the participant instructs.*

Let's do an example now where you ordered delivery from a restaurant. What's the name of a place where you order delivery from? Ok, let's record an expense in the diary – you got delivery from [FILL NAME]. Go ahead and fill it out as if it was a real thing you did. *Enter expenses as the participant instructs.*

If the participant has not reported a third-party service/app:

Have you ever used a service like DoorDash or GrubHub or UberEats? And where would you order delivery from? Ok, let's record an expense in the diary – you got delivery from [FILL NAME]. Go ahead and fill it out as if it was a real thing you did, whatever details make sense to you. *Enter expenses as the participant instructs.*

Feedback on Diary Entry

Great. Now let's talk about what it was like to enter these expenses for Meals Away from Home. Talk me through how you decided what to enter where.

Walk through each column. Repeat as needed for other entries that might be delivery/app-related. Prioritize the participant's own expenses, but refer to the fictional scenario expenses if needed.

Were you ever unsure of what to enter, or where to enter information?

Tell me about this one in more detail.

Did you use a delivery service or an app?

How did you decide what to enter for the Name of Restaurant or Vendor?

Feedback on New Instructions and Form Design

Ok, thanks for going through that. Now that you have had some experience with filling out the diary, let's go back to the Instructions. Take a look at these again. Is there anything you would change, to help respondents have a better idea of how to fill in the diary?

Show the Instructions pages.

What do you think about this instruction in particular?

Point out the bullet on how to enter third-party services/apps.

And now let's look again at the form itself. What do you think about the column headers, now that you have had experience filling out the diary. Is there anything you would change, to help respondents have a better idea of how to fill in the diary?

Show the Diary form page.

Now, I'd like to show you a few different designs we have for the Instructions. Focus on this part here, the wording is different. Is there a difference between these three, or are they pretty much the same?

Is one version easier to understand?

Now take a look at these different designs we have for the form itself. Focus on the column headers where the wording is different. Is there a difference between these three, or are they pretty much the same?

Is one version easier to understand?

Thank you

Great! That's all of the questions that I have for you. Do you have any other thoughts or feedback for me about the diary?

Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful feedback!