

Appendix A: Cognitive Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. <I'm joined by my colleague _____ today. >.

The questions I'll be asking you today will be used to help inform the design of the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). The ATUS is an ongoing national survey that provides information about how Americans spend their time. We want to learn more about how people think about and report how they spend their time.

Your answers will help us improve the questions we ask. There are no right or wrong answers and we're not here to evaluate you. We're more interested in your candid responses and feedback. Your name will not be included in any report, and nothing that you say will be attributed directly to you.

Informed Consent:

Before we get started, I have some information to share with you about the study and your rights as a research participant.

- With your permission, I would like to audio record our conversation. This will allow me to concentrate on what you are saying instead of taking notes while you are talking.
- All your responses and everything you say will be kept strictly confidential, and only researchers working on this project will see your answers or hear the recording.
- Your participation in this research project is voluntary, and you have the right to stop at any time.
- We estimate the session will last up to 1 hour. If you have any comments regarding this estimate or any other aspect of this study, send them by email to BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov.
- As a thank you for your time today, you will receive a \$50 electronic gift card.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics is conducting this voluntary study under OMB No. 1220-0141, which expires on 7/31/2027. 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. 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 Federal Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2015, Federal information systems are protected from malicious activities through cybersecurity screening of transmitted data. The Privacy Act notice describes the conditions under which information related to this study will be used by BLS employees and agents.

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).

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Do you agree to participate?

- Yes, I agree.
- No - terminate

Do you agree to our recording our session?

- Yes, I agree (obtain consent after starting recording)
- No (state that this session will not be recorded)

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS

UNAIDED RECALL (SEE PART 1, PAGE 3)

The objective is to understand how respondents recall and organize activities for a selected day.

- The day used will be the previous day to the interview session.
- Respondents will be asked to “describe what they did” for the previous day without aid or guidance.
 - Respondents will report their day “unguided” – that is without prompting for what they did next. This will help identify salient activities, and in what order respondents report activities.
- Respondents are likely to ask questions – note what the respondent asks. This will be useful for identifying possible instructions for self-administration.
 - If the respondent is unable to start without guidance, use the following:

“We’re interested in everything that you did yesterday that covers all hours for that day.”
 - If further guidance is requested, instruct the respondent to continue based on how they interpret the request.

GUIDED RECALL (SEE PART 2, PAGE 4)

After respondent’s initially report their day, ask respondents to go through their day again, this time being as detailed as possible.

- The same day will be used.
 - Respondents may have been detailed in their first report. If that is the case, skip to debriefing probes focusing on commonly unreported activities.
- Respondents will be prompted to start with the first activity of the day; e.g., “when you woke up”.
- Respondents will be prompted after each activity as needed: “What did you do next?”
 - Probing will be done when activities that have common related activities are reported and the related activity is not. For example,
 - Eating and food preparation and cleaning
 - Dining or shopping and transit/travel; Child-pick-up/drop off and transit/travel
 - Periods of long duration (2hr+) without breaks (e.g., working; watching TV)

CLASSIFICATION (SEE PART 2 - DEBRIEFING, PAGE 6)

Respondents will be asked to provide a concise label for each activity they reported with a focus on complex activities, or those that inherently have multiple identities. For example,

- Personal care; showering, dressing
- Meal and food preparation
- Travel, transit, commuting
- Care for children / activities for, or with children
- Outdoor activities; exercising
- Household chores; cleaning

Part 1 - Undefined Recall

The first thing I want you to do is to think about what you did yesterday - that would be <XXXXXXday>.

Please walk me through your day and tell me everything that you did.

IF NEEDED: We are interested in everything you did yesterday, <FILL DAY>. Please think back to yesterday, and walk us through everything you did that covers all hours for that day.

<ACTIVITIES ARE LISTED AS REPORTED; IF TIME NOT PROVIDED PROBE FOR SERIAL ORDER WHEN DONE.>

#	Start Time	End Time	Activity Detail	Notes
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2				
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Part 1 - Debriefing

Note any of the following:

- Did the respondent ask any questions before describing their day? NOTE WHAT QUESTIONS THE RESPONDENT ASKED.

- <IDENTIFY FIRST ACTIVITY REPORTED AND START AND END TIME>
 - o You first reported <ACTIVITY>. When did that start and end?

- <IDENTIFY ANY ACTIVITIES THAT WERE EXCLUDED>
 - o Tell me about anything that you did yesterday that you decided not to include?
 - o PROBE FOR OBVIOUS EXCLUSIONS, SUCH AS: EATING, SLEEPING, GROOMING/DRESSING ACTIVITIES, ETC...
 - o (IF ANYTHING EXCLUDED) Can you tell me more about why you did not include these?

- For the activities you reported, were you doing anything else at the same time?
 - o (IF YES) How did you decide on what you reported?

Part 2 - Semi-guided Recall

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTION: If the respondent was detailed in their first report, skip to debriefing. [CASES SUCH AS THIS ARE EXPECTED TO BE RARE, BUT POSSIBLE.]

I want you to think again about what you did yesterday – that is still <XXXXXXday>. This time I want you to be detailed in telling me everything that you did. Let's start with the first thing you did in the morning, for example, when you woke up?

- What is the next thing that you did?
 - <PROBE FOR THE FOLLOWING - UNDER-REPORTED ACTIVITIES>
 - o PERSONAL ACTIVITIES: SHOWERING, DRESSING, ETC.
 - After you got up, did you do anything to get ready?
 - Before you went to bed, did you do anything to get ready for bed?
 - o EATING & MEAL PREPARATION
 - (If meal/eating reported) Did you prepare or cook that meal?
 - o TRAVEL: Where was that? How did you get there?
 - o DECOMPOSING LONG ACTIVITIES (2hrs+): Did you do anything else during that time?
 - WORK/EMPLOYMENT: Did you take any breaks during that time?
 - o VAGUE ACTIVITIES (E.G., HOUSEWORK; CHORES; RELAXING; HANGING OUT, ETC.)
 - What's involved in that?

<MAKE SURE TO COLLECT START AND END TIMES OR DURATIONS FOR EACH ACTIVITY REPORTED.>

PROBES: When was that? How long did you spend doing <ACTIVITY>?

#	Start Time	End Time	Activity Detail	Notes
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2				
3				
4				
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Part 2 - Debriefing

- IF WORKING WAS NOT REPORTED:
 - Are you currently employed, or do you have a job?
 - (IF YES – EMPLOYED) Yesterday, did you work for any amount of time?

- Thinking about the activities that you reported for yesterday:
 - Which were the easiest to recall?
 - For what reasons?
 - Which were the most difficult to recall?
 - For what reasons? What strategies did you use to recall these activities?

- Please take a moment to look at what you reported doing yesterday. Please think of a one- or two-word label for each activity that you reported.

[GUIDE RESPONDENT THROUGH SELECTED ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST, E.G., COMPLEX OR THAT ARE LIKELY TO MAP TO MULTIPLE LABELS]

THE OBJECTIVE IS TO COLLECT DETAIL THAT DIFFERENTIATES THE ACTIVITY, FOR EXAMPLE:

- IF SHOPPING REPORTED – IS THIS GROCERY SHOPPING; SHOPPING FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES; ETC.
- IF SOCIALIZING REPORTED – IS THIS TALKING TO SOMEONE ON THE PHONE; FRIENDS AT A BAR; ETC.
- IF RELAXING REPORTED – IS THIS WATCHING TV, OR A MOVE; READING A BOOK; MEDITATING; ETC.

EXAMPLES:

SIMPLE
SLEEPING
EATING
WORKING

COMPLEX / VAGUE
EXERCISING / RECREATION
GROOMING
SOCIALIZING
RELAXING
HOUSEWORK
SHOPPING
TRAVELING

Part 3 – Mental Models

Next, I want you to think about reporting what you did for one day, but this time online on your own (for example, through a website that you would visit at BLS.gov). On this website we would ask you to provide the following information about your day:

- The main activities of your day.
- How much time you spent on that activity, that is when each activity started and ended.
- Whether you were with anyone else in your household and who that was.
- Where you were and how you got there.

Again, thinking about doing this on your own through a website...

- What would you use to complete the survey?
 - (IF NEEDED: For example, would you use a desktop or laptop computer, or would you want to do this using your phone?)
- Once you are on the website (using your <DEVICE>) you are asked to report about your day.
 - What do you need to know to get started?
- To report everything we need to know about your day, what do you expect to have to provide first? (AFTER EACH ITEM: What would you expect to provide next about that activity?)
 - PROBE FOR: (USE SHOW CARDS IF NEEDED)
 - Activity name, label (What did you do?)
 - Activity start time (When did that start?)
 - Activity end time (When did that end?)
 - (When did you stop that, to do something different?)
 - Activity location (Where did you do that?)
 - Method of travel (How did you get there?)
 - Who you were with (Who was with you during this activity?)

- ASK RESPONDENT HOW THEY WOULD EXPECT TO PROVIDE EACH PIECE OF INFORMATION.

What would be the best way for the website to collect <INFORMATION TYPE>?

PROBES:

- (ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION) Would you type in what you did, or select something from a list?
- Tell me how you would expect that to work?
- Are there any instructions that you think would be helpful?
 - How would you get to (or see) these instructions?

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time. We very much appreciate all of your feedback.