

# Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ) Interviewer's Guide

## Interview Skills

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**Introduction** The quality of the ACE-IQ results and their usefulness for intra- and inter- country comparisons largely depends on the quality of the interviews. This section provides generic guidelines for interviewers.

The ACE-IQ interview is about finding out and recording a list of facts and experiences relating to selected participants.

The participant needs to feel comfortable about the survey and can refuse to be interviewed as participation is voluntary. Your interview should therefore be as natural as possible and conducted politely, like a normal conversation. Some of the questions being asked are very personal and so you should be sensitive to that - remember that there are services available to help participants who may be upset or want to seek help following the interview.

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### Behaviour & tact

The table below provides guidelines on appropriate behaviour during an interview:

Behaviour	Guidelines
Respect confidentiality	Maintain the confidentiality of all information you collect.
Respect participants' time	You are asking participants for their time so be polite and prepared to explain.
Tact	If you feel that a person is not ready to assist you, do not force them but offer to come back later.
Friendly disposition	Act as though you expect to receive friendly cooperation and behave accordingly.
Body language	Maintain good eye contact and adopt appropriate body language.
Pace of interview	Don't rush the interview. Allow the participant enough time to understand and answer a question. If pressured, a participant may answer with anything that crosses their mind.
Patience	Be patient and polite at all times during the interview.
Acceptance	No matter what the responses to questions, do not be judgmental or express shock at a participant's experience. Overt responses of any kind may lead to refusing or concealing important information.
Appreciation	Thank them for their help and cooperation.

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### Asking questions

The table below provides guidelines for asking questions in an interview:

Topic	Guidelines
Issues relating to childhood experiences	Do not discuss or comment on issues relating to childhood experiences. Participants may not give correct answers to the questions but give the answers they think the interviewer is looking for.
Right or wrong answers	Point out that there are no right or wrong answers and that the interview is not a test.
Biased answers	Ask your questions according to guidelines given in the Question-by-Question Guide to avoid biased answers and ensure comparability of data
Read all options	All options must be read to the participant except for Don't know/Not sure, Refused, and Other.
Reading questions	<p>Questions should be read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as they are written in the text;</li> <li>• slowly and clearly emphasizing key words in bold;</li> <li>• in a pleasant voice that conveys interest and professionalism;</li> <li>• entirely to make sure the participant has heard it completely.</li> </ul> <p>Do not change the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wording</li> <li>• order of the questions.</li> </ul>
Making assumptions	Don't make assumptions about the participants' answers with comments such as "I know this probably doesn't apply to you, but...". This practice may prevent accurate and unbiased information.

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### Providing clarification

You may need to provide clarification when the participant:

- is unable to answer the question asked;
- does not seem to understand the question and gives an inappropriate reply;
- does not seem to have heard the question;
- is taking a long time to answer the question and hesitates;
- asks about a specific part of the question to be repeated (it is acceptable to repeat only that part);

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- asks for one option to be repeated (read all options again but you may omit one option if it has clearly been eliminated by the participant);
- asks for one term to be clarified (refer to the explanations provided in the Question-by-Question Guide).

### When to probe further

You will need to probe further to get an appropriate response when the participant:

- seems to understand the question but gives an inappropriate response
- does not seem to understand what is asked
- misinterprets the question
- cannot make up his or her mind
- digresses from the topic or gives irrelevant information
- needs to expand on what has been said or clarify the response
- gives incomplete information or an answer is unclear
- says that he or she doesn't know the answer.

### Common responses

The table below lists some common responses that may need further probing:

If the participant replies...	Then...
"I don't know"	Repeat the question.
"I still don't know"	<p>This may mean that the participant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is taking time to think and wants to gain time;</li> <li>• does not want to answer because of personal reasons;</li> <li>• in fact does not know or has no opinion.</li> </ul> <p>Probe once before recording "don't know", for example, ask "Could you give me your best estimate?".</p>
"Not applicable"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask him/her why the question does not apply to him/her.</li> <li>• Write down "not applicable" if it is clear that the question is irrelevant.</li> </ul>

#### Notes:

- Don't know/Not sure, Refuse and Not applicable should be used only as an absolute last resort.

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### Probing techniques

The table below provides a few techniques to use when probing further:

Technique	Guidelines
Repeat the question	The participant may come up with the right answer if he/she hears the question a second time.
Make a pause	This gives the participant time to collect his/her thoughts and expand on his/her answer.
Repeat the participant's reply	This is often a very effective way of having the participant reflect on the answer he/she has just given.
Use neutral probes	Avoid biased responses and probes. Never give the impression that you approve or disapprove of what the participant says, or that their answer is right or wrong. Instead, if you want more information, ask "anything else?", or "could you tell me more about...?"

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**Interruptions** Interruptions may occur during an interview. If they become too long or too many, suggest returning at another time to complete the interview.

Take care that even if interrupted or delayed, you should remain patient and polite at all times.

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### Refusal to answer

Some participants may refuse to be interviewed. Reasons for this are varied and differ from one participant to another. Some participants may not refuse outright but may express hesitancy, reservation or hostility.

You will learn to distinguish between refusals (e.g. hesitancy from a definite refusal). Success in obtaining cooperation will depend upon your manner and resourcefulness.

Participants must not be forced to respond to the whole interview or to any part of the survey process. However, the more refusals that are made, the less representative the survey is of the whole population.

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### Handling refusals

Be prepared to obtain cooperation from a participant who does not want to be interviewed. In general, be pleasant, good-natured and professional and most participants will cooperate.

Use the table below to help you handle some refusal situations:

If...	Then...
The participant becomes defensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• show patience and understanding;</li><li>• provide token agreement and understanding of his/her viewpoint, that is, saying something like, "I can understand that" or "You certainly have the right to feel that way";</li><li>• convey the importance of the survey to the participant.</li></ul>
You may have visited at a bad time	Try again later
The participant may have misunderstood the purpose of the visit	Try to explain the purpose again.
You think you may get a "no"	Try to leave and suggest coming back later before you get a partial or an absolute "no".

### Language issues

Be aware that if you use 'interpreters of convenience' (such as members of the participant's family or household, the village headman, or domestic staff), you may get incorrect data being recorded.

If you don't get sufficient cooperation due to a language barrier, report this to your supervisor.

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