



Parent/Caregiver Interview Guide

Interviews are a great way to discover ideas and perspectives that you didn't already know, suspect, or consider. When conducting a discovery-oriented interview, your main goal is to create a welcoming conversational space for the interviewee(s) to share what they really think. The first step is always to establish trust and rapport. Consider recording the conversation (with permission) or taking detailed field notes. If you're recording the conversation, a transcription tool like [Otter.ai](https://otter.ai) can help save time when it comes to reviewing the interview.

This interview guide offers a starting point for formal, in-depth, systematic data collection for a specific group of participants. Quick response questions are usually the best place to start when pursuing a particular idea or topic. The digging deeper questions are useful when an interviewee demonstrates a particular interest in or experience with the topic. For easy reference, we have also pulled out the brief, quick response interview questions you might ask on the fly when the opportunity presents itself.

Brief Interview Questions

1. Which library program activities have you and your child participated in, both in the library and at home?
2. How has this program affected you personally (as a parent, teacher, facilitator, or otherwise)?
3. What is the main thing your child has learned from this program?
4. How would you summarize the value of this program for you and/or your child?

In-Depth Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for participating! Your observations and opinions are invaluable.
- Our main purpose is to get the kind of rich detail that only a family member/caregiver can provide.
- I'm asking these questions on behalf of or as a representative of [fill in the blank].
- The decision to participate is completely voluntary, and you can end the conversation at any time.
- Your responses will remain confidential. May I request permission to record?
- Do you have any questions or concerns?



QUESTIONS

Topic: Program Participation

Quick response: Which library program activities have you and your child participated in, both at home and in person?

Digging deeper:

- Why did you choose to participate in this program?
- What were the biggest factors in that decision?
- How new are these types of activities for you and your child?
- How regularly does your child do tinkering, making, or STEM type things on their own?
- In an average week, how much time would you estimate you and your child engage in making, tinkering, or STEM activities?

Topic: Parent/Caregiver Outcomes

Quick response: How has this program affected you personally (as a parent, teacher, facilitator, or otherwise)?

Digging deeper:

- What's one thing that you felt worked well and why? What's one thing you felt didn't work well and why?
- Do you feel more or less confident than before this program when helping your child with tinkering, making, or STEM activities and learning? What, if anything, changed?
- How often do you find yourself engaging in meaningful dialogue with your child about tinkering, making, or STEM activities? What are those conversations like? How has this program changed those conversations?
- What's your opinion about activities that are hard or about letting your child fail?

Topic: Parent/Caregiver Perceptions of Child Outcomes

Quick response: What is the main thing your child has learned from this program? (Make sure to have this graphic of the [Exploratorium's Learning Dimensions](#) printed and ready to show, if needed.)

Digging deeper:

- [Levels of Agency] Overall, would you describe your child's engagement more as "responding" (initial interactions and observations), "exploring" (probing the problems, variables, and possible solutions), or "owning" (taking intellectual risks, applying understanding, and contributing to the community) in their making/tinkering?
- [Learning Dimensions] Which, if any, of the learning dimensions in the graphic (initiative & intentionality, social & emotional engagement, creativity & self-expression, conceptual understanding, problem solving & critical thinking) did you see examples of in your child's making and tinkering?



Topic: Parent/Caregiver Perceptions about the Program and the Library

Quick response: How would you summarize the value of this program for you and/or your child?

Digging deeper:

- How critical was the library program for instigating tinkering, making, or STEM activities/learning?
- What would be missed if the program were not available?
- Where do you intend to look for STEM activities for your child in the future?
- How could the program be improved?
- What have you or would you share with other families/caregivers about the program?
- What would cause you to participate again or not?
- If applicable, please compare the online versus in-person at the library versions of the program. Which do you prefer? Why?

Final Questions: Is there anything else you would like to share? What have we missed?

Note: Despite how inconsequential this final question might seem, it often generates the most useful data if you just give interviewees a lighthearted second or two to reflect.

Thank you!