

Qualitative Data Analysis: Step-by-Step

Step 1 Multiple readings and making notes

- 1. Conduct multiple close readings of interview transcripts (listen to audio/video recordings several times, too)**
- 2. Make notes about your observations and reflections of the interviews themselves (write down any thoughts or comments that may be significant)**
 - a. Content – what was said**
 - b. Language – how it was said (metaphors, repetitions, etc.)**
 - c. Tone – way it was said (pauses, volume, body language, etc.)**
- 3. Pay close attention to distinctive phrases and emotional responses**
- 4. Developing the information into a table or spreadsheet may be helpful for organization**

Step 2 Transforming notes into Emergent Themes

- 1. At this point, work primarily with notes developed in Step 1. Do not begin Step 2 until detailed and comprehensive notes have been developed in Step 1**
- 2. Develop themes from the notes that are at a higher level of abstraction from those notes**
 - a. Level 1: Object – tangible things**
 - b. Level 2: Experience – interpretation (shared experience may have same objects but different feelings for participants)**
 - c. Level 3: Concept – beliefs, values, patterns of thought (these ideas go beyond the reality of the experience to ideas and thoughts about it)**

Step 3 Seeking relationships and clustering themes

1. At this point, work primarily with the themes developed in Step 2. Do not begin Step 3 until detailed and comprehensive work has been completed in Step 2
2. Look for connections between the emerging themes. Group them by conceptual similarities and give them a descriptive label
3. The result will likely be a list of major themes and sub-themes

NOTE: Some themes may be dropped because they do not fit into the conceptual structure or because there is little evidential support

Step 4 Writing the Narrative

1. At this point, work primarily with the clustered themes and sub-themes developed in Step 3. Do not begin Step 4 until the conceptual work has been completed in Step 3.
2. Write a narrative about each theme/sub-theme in relation to how they answered the research questions
3. Be sure to liberally include illustrative quotes from participants that provide support for the themes/sub-themes. This practice retains the participants' voices and shows the themes/sub-themes' pertinence to the participants' experiences
4. Give contextual meaning to the themes through analytical statements

Source This guide developed from the article below. For more information, read the entire source.

Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J.A. (2014). A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne Psychological Journal*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.14691/CPPJ.20.1.7>