

Discussion guide (example)

Session setup

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Participants: [target profile]

Moderator: [name]

Observers: [names, if any]

Research goals:

- Understand [topic / behavior / need]
- Evaluate [concept / prototype / product / journey]
- Identify usability issues, expectations, and improvement opportunities

Intro and consent — 5 min

Thanks for joining today. We're speaking with people to better understand [topic]. This is not a test of you; we're testing the experience. There are no right or wrong answers.

With your permission, we'd like to record the session for note-taking and analysis. The recording will only be used internally.

Confirm:

- *Recording consent*
- *Screen sharing works*
- *Audio/video quality*
- *Participant is comfortable thinking aloud*

Warm-up — 5 min

Goal: build rapport and understand context.

Example questions:

- Can you briefly tell me about your role / background?
- How often do you [relevant behavior]?
- What tools, products, or services do you currently use for this?
- When was the last time you [relevant task]? What happened?

Current behavior and needs — 10 min

Goal: understand the participant's existing workflow, motivations, and pain points.

Example questions:

- Walk me through how you currently [complete task / solve problem].
- What usually triggers this need?
- What works well today?
- What is frustrating or time-consuming?
- What do you wish were easier?
- How do you decide whether something is successful?

Concept / prototype introduction — 2 min

I'm going to show you [a concept / prototype / flow]. Please interact with it as naturally as possible and say out loud what you're thinking, expecting, or finding confusing.

Avoid explaining too much upfront. Let the participant react naturally.

Task-based exploration — 15–25 min

For each task, include:

Task [#]: [task instruction]

Example: "Imagine you want to [goal]. Show me how you would do that."

Observe:

- First impressions
- Navigation choices
- Hesitations or confusion
- Misinterpretations
- Workarounds
- Completion success
- Emotional reactions

Follow-up probes:

- What did you expect to happen here?

- What made you choose that option?
- Was anything unclear?
- How confident are you that you completed the task?
- What, if anything, would you change?
- How does this compare to how you do it today?

Overall feedback — 10 min

Goal: gather broader reactions after hands-on use.

Example questions:

- What was your overall impression?
- What felt most useful?
- What felt confusing or unnecessary?
- Was anything missing?
- Who do you think this is for?
- In what situation would you use this?
- What would prevent you from using it?
- How would you describe this to someone else?

Prioritization — 5 min

Example prompts:

- Of everything you saw, what would be most valuable to you?
- What should be improved first?
- What would make this feel trustworthy / easy / worth using?
- If you could change one thing, what would it be?

Wrap-up — 3 min

That's all from my side. Is there anything we didn't cover that you think is important?

Thank the participant, explain any next steps, and stop the recording.