

Code of Conduct

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# Responsibilities of Interviewers

A guide based on the MRS Code of Conduct

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This statement of the responsibilities of research interviewers towards the people they interview, and the clients who commission the surveys on which they work, is based on the detailed Code of Conduct issued by The Market Research Society (MRS).

It is intended for

- **new interviewers** – to help with learning the key dos and don'ts of the job
- **experienced interviewers** – as a quick reference guide

MRS has issued this booklet as part of its policy of supporting people in the profession, so that they are able to maintain the reputation of market, social and opinion research and ensure that it prospers by the professionalism they bring to their work.

The formal Code is supplemented at the end of the booklet by a 'Code of Common Sense' for interviewers – something suggested by experienced market researchers who were consulted when this document was first drafted.

# Market, social and opinion research

(From the Introduction to the Code of Conduct)

These are the principles which market, social and opinion research seeks to follow:

- It must be based on willing co-operation between the public and business organisations.
- Both parties must be able to have confidence that the research is carried out honestly, without intruding on the people who take part, or harming them.
- Its purpose is to collect and analyse information, not to sell, and not to influence the opinions of those taking part.
- The right to privacy must be respected; people who take part must not be identified without their agreement; and they must not be harmed or embarrassed as a result of taking part.
- Wherever possible, those who take part must be told the purpose of the research.
- The findings must be reported accurately and must never be used to mislead.

## The people concerned

Four sets of people are primarily concerned in market, social and opinion research:

- 1 The clients who commission research.
- 2 The researchers who carry it out: interviewers, their managers, the organisations that employ them.
- 3 The people they interview.
- 4 The public who see interviewers at work, and the wider public in general.

# Before you begin a project

You must be properly trained so that you fully comply with the Code and all legal requirements and be briefed on the particular job to enable you to understand the project. This may include the following issues.

## **Client-supplied lists**

Know whether the client supplied the sample list. In this instance, if requested by the participant, the client's identity must be revealed at some point in the research.

## **Confidentiality v non-confidentiality**

Understand whether the research you are administering is confidential or non-confidential as this will affect what you say to the participant in the introduction.

## **What is confidential research?**

Confidential research means research projects based on the anonymity of the people who supply information, in which their identity and personal details are accessed only by the researchers running the project, and only for purposes of the research project in which they take part.

## **What is non-confidential research?**

Non-confidential research means research projects that require personal details to be passed back to the client for a particular reason. You must get permission from the participants to be able to do this and the permission statement must include what information will be passed back, to whom (e.g. the name of the client) and the purposes for which the data will be used.

## **When introducing a survey**

- Don't mislead or pressurise a participant when asking them to take part.
- State your name and the name of the research organisation.
- Show your Interviewer Identity Card.
- Make it clear that the interview will be carried out according to the MRS Code of Conduct.
- State what the interview is about.
- If asked, state how long it will take.
- Tell them where you got their name from (if appropriate).
- If the participant is to be monitored during the research let them know so they can make an informed decision whether to continue (unless it is for internal quality control/supervision purposes, in which case you do not need to tell participants they are being monitored).

## During the project

You have the following responsibilities to the people you interview.

- Researchers must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are not directly harmed or adversely affected as a result of participating in a research project.
- Any assurances you give about the interview, including how long it will take, must be factually correct.
- If you promise an incentive to participants this promise must be honoured.
- Tell the truth about your own skills and experience and about the organisation you work for and never make false claims. Always act to maintain the good name of market and social research, and public confidence in it.

## Special circumstances

In addition to the above requirements the following statements are here to help you when interviewing in special circumstances.

### **Interviewing children**

The Code states that a child is a person under the age of 16.

You must get permission from a responsible adult, such as a parent, guardian, nanny, teacher or grandparent, before you interview a child.

You can only collect personal information relating to other people from a child if it is for the purpose of gaining permission from a responsible adult.

Social Grade classification questions should be asked of the responsible adult.

### **Recording/observation**

If you are interviewing while recording/observation is taking place:

- you must let the participant know at recruitment stage.
- you must not pass off a client as one of the research team.

### **Mystery shopping**

If you are interviewing using mystery shopping techniques you must not record anyone, unless they are employed by the client and the client has advised them that a mystery shopping exercise will take place at some point in the future and they may be recorded.

## After the project

If you are storing the data for any length of time you must keep this data secure. If anything were to happen to the data in your care the Information Commissioner's Office (the body responsible for data protection legislation in the UK) would expect that the data was kept adequately secure. If you are keeping the data for any length of time and reusing the data you may need to register with the Information Commissioner as a data controller.

# Code of Common Sense

## **Preparing for research interviewing**

Don't be afraid to ask your supervisor about anything that isn't clear in the instructions for the research. If you understand fully you will work with confidence, and that communicates itself to the people you interview and makes the experience more successful for them and for you.

## **Seeking interviews**

Approach people courteously when you request an interview: show your MRS identity card, and introduce yourself as a market, social or opinion research interviewer and give the name of your company. Respect their convenience: in the street, don't force them to step into the road, or stop anyone who is about to go into a shop or get on to a bus. Accept a refusal without question, at once, and with a smile.

## **Courtesy to the general public**

Show good manners to other street users: don't obstruct the pavement, or block access to shop windows or entrances. Look good: dress appropriately for the place and circumstances where you are working. Don't eat or smoke in the street.

## **Taking care of yourself**

Take common sense precautions for your own security. Before starting work on interviews always tell your family or the company where you are going. Leave your bag/wallet at home, and carry the minimum of essential possessions and cash. Keep your car keys in your pocket.



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