

# Tips for taking UX research notes

Good note taking in UX research is not to be equated with the ability to type or write fast. It's about transforming a mass of observations into a digestible representation of text. Done well, note taking will make the rest of the project run smoothly and lead to solid results. Here are 5 tips to get it right from the start.

## 1. Stay true to the facts

Take the position of an objective observer and don't make assumptions about the participant's thinking or feeling.

### Do

Participant breathes heavily and pauses after seeing the new menu structure.

Participant states that she tried the autocorrect feature once and it worked well.

### Don't

Participant dislikes the new menu structure. He has trouble navigating and can't find what he is looking for.

The autocorrect feature works well for the participant.

## 2. Stick to a consistent format

Be consistent about the note taking perspective (1st person or 3rd person), the style (bullet points vs. floating text) and the format of timestamps. Clearly differentiate quotes from observations.

### Do

[12:38] Participant looks at the new menu structure. "I'm looking for the invoices tab which used to be here."

[19:89] "I assume you can export the file here." Clicks export button. "Now that was easy."

### Don't

[12:38] Participant looks at the new menu structure. I'm looking for the invoices tab which used to be here.

[19:89] I assume you can export the file here.

- Clicks export button
- Now that was easy.

## 3. Carefully paraphrase

Summarize notes to make them easy to read, but be careful not to leave out important details.

### Do

"I'm looking for the invoices tab which used to be here. "

### Don't

"I'm, you know, looking for the, like that, invoices button ... the invoices tab. I remember that this button used to be here, you know."

#### 4. Highlight missed or incomplete parts

Mark parts that you couldn't completely capture with a timestamp to revisit them in the recording. Also indicate where information is incomplete, e.g. because the conversation took a turn, to ask about these later.

##### Do

Participant states that she hasn't used the new search feature yet, because **[missing - 15:22]**

There are several reasons why she was confused. The copy wasn't descriptive enough. **[reasons incomplete]**

##### Don't

Participant states that she hasn't used the new search feature yet.

There are several reasons why she was confused. The copy wasn't descriptive enough.

#### 5. Watch for the unspoken

The participant's body language or emotional reaction can provide additional information beyond what is said or consciously done. Make sure to note this as well.

##### Do

Participant leans forward in excitement. "Yes, network security is an important topic for us."

##### Don't

"Yes, network security is an important topic for us."