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Developing Qualitative Research Analyses

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Developing qualitative research analyses

This article describes how to use the Information Mapping® method and Microsoft® Office Word for developing analysis sections in qualitative research articles. It covers these topics:

- Differentiating between processes and procedures
- Creating and using process templates
- Creating and using procedure templates
- Writing transitions
- Converting tables to text
- Polishing

All MS Word window, function and command names are in *italic*.

Differentiating between processes and procedures

An analysis is a process that contains stages (or phases). Each stage contains one or more procedures that contain steps. Use these terms consistently to avoid confusion and enable replication of your study.

To quickly structure an analysis, use process and procedure tables, which you can later convert into paragraphs after you've entered information in each table cell. The tables help ensure that you do not (*i*) report findings in the analysis and (*ii*) overlook vital information—because if a cell is empty, then information is probably missing.

Creating and using process templates

Use Word's table creation function to create process and procedure tables (do not use tabs):

1. Select *Table>Insert>Table* (e.g., on the top menu bar in Word 2003).
2. Type 3 in the *Number of columns* field (you can always add or delete them later).
3. Type 5 in the *Number of rows* field (you can always add or delete).
4. Select *Auto* for the *Fixed column width* prompt.
5. Select *OK*, and the table is displayed.

Note: Some authors find table lines helpful during information development, while others find them distracting. So insert whatever makes the tables usable for you.

After you create a table, you're ready to turn it into a process template that you can reuse:

1. Type column headings, such as these, in the table's first row:

Stage	Description	Results		
Stage	Description	Notes		
Stage	Description	Results	Notes	
Stage	Description	Results	References	
Stage	Description	Results	Notes	Examples
Phase	...			

2. Save the file: give it a name such as p_templates, and close the file.

3. Open p_templates, select *Save As...*, and give the file a new name (e.g., DP_anlys).

Note: Table-generating macros are an alternative to saving templates in .dot or .doc formats, but instructions for creating and using them are beyond this article's scope.

4. Write an introduction to the Analysis section above the table in the new file (e.g., Data were analyzed in these stages:).

5. Describe data analysis in the process table in the new file, for example:

	Stage Description	Results
I	Watching and listening to videos.	The big picture: an overview of patients' capabilities during morning wake-up routines.
II	Transcribing videos.	Patients' capabilities documented.
III	Searching for frequently occurring words and phrases.	Lists of words and phrases that describe capabilities are ready for categorization.
IV	Categorizing capabilities.	Identification of frequently occurring capability categories.

6. Highlight the Description column (except the top row); *Copy* and *Paste* the column two lines below the process table.

7. Convert the copied column to text:

- Put the cursor in the copied column.
- Select *Table>Convert>Table to text* (in Word 2003).
- Click on the *Paragraph marks* button under the *Separate text with* prompt.
- Select *OK*, and a list of process stages is displayed.

8. Highlight the list of process stages, and select *Heading 2* from the font style window (or select *Format>Styles and Formatting>Heading 2*). Always use the same heading level for all stages and start each heading with a gerund (ing ending):

Watching and listening to videos

Transcribing videos

Searching for frequently occurring words and phrases

Categorizing capabilities

Your analysis section is now outlined and ready to be further developed by inserting a procedure table under each process stage heading (or more tables, as necessary).

Creating and using procedure templates

Create one or more procedure tables to structure your descriptions to enable study replication:

1. Open p_templates, copy the table, and paste it into your analysis file under the first new level-2 heading that you created (e.g., as above, Watching and listening to videos).

2. Type column headings, such as these, in the procedure table's first row:

Step Action Results

Step Action Notes

Step Action Results Notes

Step Action Results Notes Example

3. Describe the procedure, for example:

Step	Action	Results	Notes
a.	Established criteria before viewing.	Checklist for data analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Adopt an objective attitude. •Don't assume anything. •Play back as often as necessary if patients are not understood the first time you hear them speak. 	All authors complied with criteria as per Giorgi (1985).
b.	Watched and listened to videos.	Acquainted with patients' capabilities.	This step was repeated as often as necessary throughout analysis.
c.	Discussed observations.	Observations aligned with research objective.	

4. Create more procedure tables and insert them under the other level-2 headings (process stages) until you've documented the entire analysis. Try to start each action statement with a verb.

Study and correct the overall process description and each procedure after you describe each stage in detail to (i) ensure that you've documented everything and (ii) generate ideas for developing transition sentences.

Writing transitions

Lead readers from one section to another by indicating what is ahead. This article, for example, uses these transitions:

- To quickly and easily structure an analysis, use...

- After you create a table, you're ready to ...
- Your analysis section is now outlined and ready ...
- Study and correct the overall process description and ...
- When your analysis is in paragraphs, then ...

Note: Never write two consecutive headings without text in between—a convention that some non-native English speakers use. A heading indicates what the information below it is about. So either delete one heading or write a transition between the two headings, for example:

DESIGN AND METHODS

This study is part of a mega . . . This section describes this study's objectives, participants and setting ...

Objectives

Text ...

Participants and setting

Text ...

Converting tables to text

If you cannot use process and procedure tables in your article, then convert them into paragraphs:

1. Select *Table>Convert>Table to text* (in Word 2003).
2. Click on the *Paragraph marks* button under the *Separate text with* prompt.
3. Select *OK*.

When your analysis is in paragraphs, then edit and complement the information. The process table could be reformatted like this:

Analysis occurred in these stages and yielded these results: (i) Watching and listening to videos of patients' morning wake-up routines, which gave us the big picture—an overview of patients' capabilities; (ii) transcribing the videos, which documented patients' capabilities in files and on paper; (iii) searching for frequently occurring words and phrases, which led to lists of words and phrases ready for categorization; and (iv) categorizing capabilities, which resulted in identification of frequently occurring categories of capabilities.

Or like this:

Analysis occurred in these stages with these results:

- A.** Watching and listening to videos of interviews. Results: The big picture: an overview of patients' experiences.
- B.** Transcribing videos. Results: Patients' experiences documented in files and on paper.
- C.** Searching for frequently occurring words and phrases. Results: Lists of words and phrases ready for categorization.
- D.** Categorizing experiences. Results: Identification of frequently occurring categories of experiences.

Polishing

Consider these enhancements by studying articles published in the targeted journal:

- Match these mechanical details with the journal articles: (i) font type, style, and size; (ii) capitalization; (iii) punctuation; (iv) highlighting (e.g., of terminology); and (v) presentation of

trademarks and product names—in headings, paragraphs, lists, tables, illustrations, footnotes, and references.

- Manually check the spelling of names and titles in references and footnotes.
- Run the spelling and grammar checker.

Benefits

The methods described in this article *(i)* save development/writing time; *(ii)* reduce revision time (e.g., when dealing with reviewer/referee comments); *(iii)* cut translating and editing costs; *(iv)* facilitate development of clear, concise, consistent information; *(v)* enable replication of your study; and *(vi)* increase your chances of acceptance.

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