Keys to Success:

- Use plain language (e.g. avoid technical terms and jargon), and keep your questions brief.
- Group questions regarding similar topics and experiences together.
- Begin with more general experiences, and then ask about more specific experiences.
- Begin with less threatening/sensitive experiences; develop mutual trust before delving more deeply.
- Where possible, provide time bounds for participants, so that they can more easily identify experiences or feelings in their memory (e.g. “tell me about the first time...,” “in this school year, have you...”)
- Avoid asking leading questions. Instead, allow the participant to develop their own thoughts and feelings.

The following section provides examples of qualitative questions:

1) Example: Interviews for a project studying the experience of students playing Quidditch.
   Good: What were your reasons for joining the Quiddich Team last year?
   o Good follow-ups:
     ▪ How did the experience work out for you? What about the experience made it ______________? (fill in blank with participant experience)
   Bad: Quiddich is not really a sport. What made you decide to participate?
   o Note: leading with the interviewer’s negative feelings will likely change the tone of the response.
   o Bad follow-ups:
     ▪ So you just decided to quit? Why? (note: leads with judgment)
     ▪ Do you think you’ll join the team again next year? (note: yes/no response)

2) Example: Interviews studying students’ participation in a research project.
   Good: How did you decide to participate in this research project? What were the most important factors?
   ▪ What other research projects, if any, have you participated in since coming to college?
   ▪ What have you liked most about your experience? What have you liked least?
   Bad: Why would you fail to participate in research, knowing how important it is for grad school?
   o Note: implying judgment will change the tone of the response.
   ▪ Are you giving up on the idea of participating in research entirely then? (yes/no, judging)

3) Example: Interviews about students experiences in the student union.
   Good: Think about the last time you were in the student union. How did you feel?
   ▪ What about the people you encountered made you feel that way?
   ▪ What about the spaces you encountered made you feel that way?
   Bad: Tell me how you feel about the overcrowding in the student union.
   o Note: Assumes a negative experience in the union rather than leaving open.
   ▪ Have you told anyone in the union about your experiences? (note: yes/no)
   ▪ I’ve never had an experience like that. Are you sure you are remembering it correctly? (note: judging, yes/no)

For more information check out the following documents, located at http://www.sairo.ucla.edu/AssessmentSupport.html

- Planning Your Assessment
- Worksheet for Assessment Planning
- Interview Planning Checklist
- Links to Additional Resources.