Guerilla Research Sprint

15 minutes

Research

Get outside and talk to users in this fast research sprint. In 15 minutes, participants find people, conduct brief interviews, and uncover real insights that challenge assumptions. This exercise shows that valuable research doesn't need weeks of planning. It just takes focus and good questions. It's ideal for quickly validating ideas or breaking through team debates.

H HOW TO RUN

1 Lightning Briefing — 2 min

Assign each participant one focused question (e.g., "What's the most frustrating thing about using apps while walking?").

- Define a target user profile (e.g., coffee shop: laptop users).
- Set success criteria: find 1-2 people, get specific examples, return with a surprising insight.

2 Sprint Research Phase — 12 min

Minutes 1-3: User Hunting. Scan for approachable targets. Approach with: "Quick research question - got 2 minutes?"

- Minutes 4-10: Rapid Interview. Ask the core question. Follow up with: "Can you give me a specific example?". Note key quotes.
- Minutes 11-12: Sprint Back. Thank the participant and return. Note the biggest surprise.

3 Lightning Synthesis — 1 min

Each person shares their most unexpected finding in 10 seconds.

- No discussion, just rapid insights. The facilitator notes patterns and contradictions.

KEY TIP

Pre-Sprint Setup: Choose high-traffic locations with relevant user types.

O OBJECTIVES

- Conduct research in a short time
- Gain confidence in recruiting and interviewing users quickly
- Prioritize key research questions
- Synthesize insights under pressure
- Experience guerrilla research

M MATERIALS

ESSENTIAL

- ☐ Timer (visible to all).
- ☐ Pre-written question cards.
- ☐ Notepads or phones for notes.
- ☐ Pens.
- ☐ Designated meeting point.

OPTIONAL

- ☐ incentives (gum, mints, small gift cards).

P PARTICIPANTS

2 to 3 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- Set a visible timer.
- Emphasize speed over perfection. It's about rapid insights.
- Create energy.
- During the Sprint: Stay visible for support.
- Announce time updates (e.g., "5 minutes left!").
- Coach participants who struggle to get interviews.
- Document synthesis insights.
- Challenges & Solutions: Challenge: Can't find willing participants. Solution: Lower the bar; even 1-minute conversations count.
- Challenge: Surface-level answers. Solution: Push for specific examples: "When did that last happen?"
- Challenge: Running out of time. Solution: "Last quick question: what would have made that better?"
- Challenge: No insights. Solution: Debrief: "What did you learn about approaching people?"
- Success Indicators: Participants return with user quotes.
- Stories contradict assumptions.
- Concrete examples of pain points.
- Emotional reactions identified.
- New questions sparked.
- Variations: Team Competition (20 minutes): Multiple teams, same question. Compare findings and vote on the most surprising insight.
- Sequential Sprints (45 minutes): 3 rounds, different aspects of the same topic. Build a user picture.
- Location-Specific Tips: Coffee Shops: Approach people waiting or sitting alone. Ask about apps or decision-making.
- Transit Stations: Target people waiting. Focus on mobile behavior.
- Campus Areas: Students are often willing to help. Great for tech adoption questions.
- Emergency Backup Plans: Pivot to staff: Interview employees about customer behavior.
- Quick online survey.
- I've seen teams struggle with synthesis. Remind them it's about quick, top-of-mind takeaways, not polished reports.