

## FAQ 34: What are some good approaches to conducting focus groups with children?

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market and medical research, but the fields of application have new been, focus groups are an integral part of the methodological canon and well dynamics, tensions between the participants, and to gain more information they should not be regarded as a substitute for questionnaires or single course of method triangulation, for example, along with (qualitative or interviews.

be used in the same manner with children. Thus, when conducting focus er factors that need to be considered in addition to the traditional issues y because of cognitive, linguistic, and psychological differences between

### Common practice

The most important thing in successfully conducting focus groups is to create a trusting atmosphere between the abilities – for co children, a moderator, as well as having knowledge of interviewing sk experience of working with children, together with knowledge of their devel

In the implementation of focus groups, the participants are to be seen a respect. Children and adolescents particularly enjoy this status and are u In this context it may be helpful to inform the participants about the rese rules at the beginning. A pleasant conversational setting will facilitate the some food and drinks and relaxed and comfortable chairs or seating area pupils or in school facilities a setting should be provided that is not reminis al., 2010: 18). Sometimes an unfamiliar setting may provoke anxiety, esp participants should be provided with a reward as appreciation of their he reward could b Furthermore, the use of name tags or

badges may also be helpful in order to assign names later on. To put children at ease about recording the focus groups, it might be useful to allow them to familiariz

## Questions to consider

Related to the research design and the research question as well as to the age of the children and adolescents, it has to be decided whether the focus groups should be homogeneous concerning sex, or a mixed group, and whether the moderator should be a woman or a man, or two researchers of different sexes together. Hoppe et al. (1995) suggest homogeneous groups when working with children. A second key issue in the organization of the groups is what age range should be represented. Most of the time it is best to avoid large age discrepancies (see Hoppe et al., 1995). Morgan et al. (2002: 12–14) suggest more possibilities and opportunities for increasing the involvement of children or to break their potential reluctance, for example, helpful figures as alternative personalities (e.g. hand puppets; see Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2004), role-playing scenarios, games, or pen-and-paper exercises.

With respect to the number of participants in children's focus groups, it is good to aim for 4–6 children per group and for children aged between 6 and 10. The number may be increased to 8 or more with older children, depending on the research question and aims. The duration of focus groups with children under the age of 10

Example of a study: Using focus groups to discuss sensitive topics with children

This study (see Hoppe et al