

Acknowledgement: This activity has been adapted from Professor Andy Ko's course at UW

Contextual inquiry

Choose a partner (1 min)

Find someone you don't know. It's important that they're a stranger, as contextual inquiries are generally always with strangers. You'll want to get used to establishing rapport with someone you don't know.

Contextual inquiry 1 (15 min)

Choose who will go first. That person should choose a task that satisfies the following constraints:

- They actually have to do the task
- They would actually do the task on campus on the device they're using
- The task should take about 10 minutes

Examples of tasks include a homework assignment, a personal chore, some shopping they intended to do, etc.

The other person should conduct a contextual inquiry on their task:

- Like an interview, define a focus. There's too much to observe to see everything, so you have to decide what to pay attention to.
- Create a *partnership* between you and your informant. You act as an interested learner, they act like a knowledgeable expert. It should feel like a master/apprentice relationship.
- Perform an inquiry in a real context. Every time you're confused, ask a question. Have them teach you.
- Don't generate questions in advance; think of them as you observe.
- Focus on questions about the work that is happening in context.
- Record audio, photos, notes, and any other raw data you can use later to interpret

Contextual inquiry 2 (15 min)

Now swap, having the other person do the same.

Reflect (10 min)

We'll come back together and discuss these questions as a class.

- What did it feel like to observe?
- What did it feel like to be observed?
- What did you learn about your focus?
- What was difficult about doing the inquiry?

Credit

Submit your notes from your contextual inquiry with **your name on it**.