

Contextual Inquiry

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What is is?

- Method of investigating users in the wild.
- Based on watching users use an existing system.
- Allows you to learn what tasks are performed and how they are performed.
- Usually recorded for later analysis.
- Helps you define a more detailed specification of what a user does.

How do you do it?

- 1 Decide what you want to learn and to what depth.
- 2 Choose the right person to interview.
- 3 Initial interview: explain what your going to do.
- 4 Switch to a master-apprentice mode:
 - Get them to go about their task.
 - Watch closely how they do it.
 - Ask occasional questions to clarify.
 - Aim to learn how to do it yourself.
- 5 Summarize with the user what you have learned.

Pros

- Watch people in their natural environment.
- Not much interference from the interviewer.
- Learn how an existing task is performed.
- Doesn't take too much time away from the user performing their tasks.
- You learn whilst they work.

Cons

- Hawthorne effect.
- Potentially disruptive to the user.

The Internet

Slides Available at <http://sucs.org/~eclipse>
and probably at <http://cs.swan.ac.uk/~csm49/>

Questions?

Any Questions?