

Research Rundowns >Qualitative Methods > Qualitative Coding & Analysis

This review is in the form of an abbreviated set of directions for initial coding and analysis. There are many ways to accomplish both actions. This approach assumes you are using interview data. For a more detailed treatment of these and related analysis concepts, [click here](#).

Interview Data (Identifying & Coding Themes)

Open coding

At this first level of coding, you are looking for distinct concepts and categories in the data, which will form the basic units of your analysis. In other words, you are breaking down the data into first level concepts, or master headings, and second-level categories, or subheadings.

Researchers often use highlights to distinguish concepts and categories. For example, if interviewees consistently talk about teaching methods, each time an interviewee mentions teaching methods, or something related to a teaching method, you would use the same color highlight. Teaching methods would become a concept, and other things related (types, etc.) would become categories – all highlighted the same color. **Use different colored highlights** to distinguish each broad concept and category. What you should have at the end of this stage are transcripts with 3-5 different colors in lots of highlighted text. **Transfer these into a brief outline, with concepts being main headings and categories being subheadings.**

Axial coding

In open coding, you were focused primarily *on the text* to define concepts and categories. In axial coding, you are using *your concepts and categories* while re-reading the text to 1. Confirm that your concepts and categories accurately represent interview responses and, 2. Explore how your concepts and categories are related. To examine the latter, you might ask, What conditions caused or influenced concepts and categories? What is/was the social/political context? or What are the associated effects or consequences?

For example, if one of your concepts is *Adaptive Teaching*, and two of your categories are *tutoring* and *group projects*, an axial code might be a phrase like “our principal encourages different teaching methods.” This discusses the context of the concept and/or categories, and suggests that you may need a new category labeled “supportive environment.” Axial coding is merely a more directed approach at looking at the data, to help make sure that you have identified all important aspects. Have your highlights ready for revision/addition.

Create a table

Transfer final concepts and categories into a data table, [such as this one](#) (Aulls, 2004). Note how the researcher listed the major categories, then explained them after the table. This is a very effective way to organize results and/or discussion in a research paper. Here is [an excellent comprehensive guide](#) (think desk reference) to creating data displays for qualitative research.

Note: Be patient. This appears to be a quick process, but it should not be. After you are satisfied with your coding procedures, I suggest submitting your table to an expert for review, or perhaps even one of the participants (if interviewing) to promote validity.