

Method Template: Field Trip



Rationale

The primary aim of a field trip is to get a group of people out in a reasonably natural environment doing a typical activity. Group interaction behaviour can then be observed, with or without technology interventions.

Preparation

Find a group of around six people willing to take an hour or longer to go outside to do an activity. If possible, audio-record some of their behaviour (many MP3 players have voice recording capabilities and can be worn around necks). Take a notepad and a small backpack with necessities such as water, rain coat, sun hat, etc. If desired, produce simple prototypes or use existing objects (e.g. a matchbox). Give participants a small list of fictional functionalities that they can choose for their device throughout the day. If possible, use two or three observers.

Activity

Ensure that the participants are able to engage in the intended activity and then let them do what they want. If needed, periodically ask participants to reflect on how they might want to use their prototype.

What To Look For

Behaviour that is of interest to the researcher can change depending on the design goals and the activity or participants being observed. Always watch for the unexpected. However, issues likely to be of interest include: communication, social interaction, decision making, effects of surrounding environments, sub-activities done, problems experienced and expressed desires.

Afterwards

Do a short debrief with participants about what they thought of the study and what situations they would like to use their device in. Review some of the audio and note conversations that occur away from the group and other observers. It may be useful to conduct interviews concerning prototypes in stable settings and record video.