

FINDING THE BEST TOOLS FOR THE JOB: GATHERING DATA, MADE EASY

Sometimes, analysing different data types can get a little technical. Here, Lucy unpacks all of the best software tips and tricks that you can use to get the most from your data sources.

Like the best Ikea flatpack, the task of qualitative data analysis comes with a set of steps, stages and “parts” required. The nuts and bolts you use to crunch a piece of text or edit a recording will depend on the end product you want to create. The steps you take to create a word cloud, for instance, are very different from the steps you’d take to tell a story, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera... zzzzz!

At this point, I think you’ve got the idea. Over the years I’ve found that the task of qualitative data analysis involves chatting not only with your participants, but with yourself too. Again, ask yourself the following:

FOR TEXT

Do I want to find key terms, recurrent words and phrases? If so, you might already be halfway there. Online tools like [Survey Monkey](#), [Mentimeter](#) and [Otter.ai](#) can do this for you by generating word clouds. If you haven’t got access to this software, I recommend downloading the free, unlimited trial of [Atlas.ti](#) and using its word cloud feature.

NOTE: you’re using a piece of generated data such as an interview or raw export of a survey, you’ll need to first omit any questions to avoid skewing the results. Questions asked tend to repeat words and phrases, muddying the count of terms and phrases to reflect your own questioning. Filtering for [Stop Words](#) is also a must, too (but only if you’re using a package like Atlas.ti. Survey Monkey and others will automatically do this for you.)

Do I want to draw out the main themes here, and/or tell a story? If you’re interested in extracting themes (not phrases) from a piece of qualitative data, you’ll need to use the grounded approach and follow up with a free software like XMind to map your findings out. Luckily, DataWise London have got free resources you can download to get started here.

FOR AUDIO-VISUAL (for more guidance, see [Superhighways](#))

What are the main themes discussed in this recording? This can be tricky, especially if you haven’t got a transcript from your recording. I would always recommend converting your audio into text, if you can. Otter.ai has free features which enable you to do this with short recordings. Once you’ve generated a transcript, use the Grounded Method discussed above and then mind map your themes out using a free software such as [XMind](#). This will help you to identify the mains themes, making it easier for you to then edit your recordings/videos accordingly into bite sized, accessible chunks.

***If you can’t generate a transcript from your recording...**

To make life easier when interviewing someone or leading a focus group, take notes as you go along. You might want to jot main themes, key words, quotes and a timestamp (i.e 2 min, 34 seconds into the recording) down as you interview. Alternatively, if you're working with a group of people, getting participants to write down short answers to your main questions can also be useful to. This is known as [the Post-it note method](#), but with most things now being online you can also try Google [Jamboard](#), [Miro Board](#) etc.

How do I want to present my video/ frame my images? Presenting a recording or images can be difficult because there's not really a right or wrong way of doing it. Software packages such as [Windows Movie Maker](#) and online tools like [Canva](#) are obvious go-to's that can help you make the edits you need to make your data presentation worthy. But the question of what- or rather what not- to include is a tricky one. DataWise London have run a few sessions on storytelling and have experts on hand to help, free of charge. If you find yourself lost down a rabbit hole, [submit your data challenge here](#). Sometimes it's best to just talk it out.