

DIFFERENT METHODS OF COLLECTING INFORMATION		
METHOD	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Surveys (Mail)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can survey many people • Not time-consuming • Relatively inexpensive • Everyone gets the same instrument • Objective interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to get much detail • Sometimes difficult to get correct addresses • May be problems with interpreting questions • Sometimes a problem getting surveys completed and returned
Surveys (Group-Administered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can survey many people • Not time-consuming • Relatively inexpensive • Everyone gets the same instrument • Object interpretation • Relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be problems with interpreting questions • Difficult to get much detail
Surveys (Telephone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to ask for more detail when needed • Everyone gets the same instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes difficult reaching people • Lack of anonymity
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher can know how people are interpreting questions • Able to ask for more detail when needed • Provide detailed data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming • Because of time, can limit sample size • Subjective interpretation • Can be expensive • Can be difficult to analyze
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher can know how people are interpreting questions • Able to interview multiple people at one time, thus, more cost-effective • Responses from one person provide stimulus for other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group setting may inhibit some individuals from providing information • Sometimes hard to coordinate multiple schedules • Responses from one person provide stimulus for other people
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective interpretation • Low burden for people providing data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming • Some items are not observable • Can be expensive • Participant behavior may be affected by observer presence
Student Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective interpretation • Low burden for people providing data • Relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not correspond to exactly what researcher wants • May be incomplete or require additional interpretation • May need special permission to use
Collection of Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective interpretation • Low burden for people providing data • Relatively inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not correspond to exactly what researcher wants • May be incomplete or require additional interpretation

Source:U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement