AIDSCAP

How to Conduct Effective Pretests

Ensuring Meaningful BCC Messages and Materials

The AIDS Control and Prevention (AIDSCAP) Project,
Implemented by Family Health International,
is funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

Project 936-5972.31-4692046
Contract HRN-5972-C-00-4001-00

This handbook was developed by the AIDSCAP Behavior Change Communication Unit.

Donna Flanagan, ***Associate Director***
Hally Mahler, ***Associate Communications Officer***
Shari Cohen, ***Consultant***

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I Introduction 3

II Pretesting 5

A. What Is Pretesting? 5

B. Why Pretest BCC Materials? 5

C. When Should I Pretest? 6

D. Pretesting: Myth vs. Fact 6

E. Pretesting Methods 8

F. How Many People Should Participate in the Pretest? 9

III Readability 11

A. What Does Readability Mean? 11

B. How to Assess Readability in Your BCC Materials 12

IV Preparation 17

A. Preparing the Materials 17

B. Preparing the Discussion Guide 18

C. Selecting the Leaders or Interviewers 18

D. Selecting Notetakers 18

E. Selecting the Test Site 18

F. Selecting Test Participants 19

G. Providing for the Participants 19

V Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) 21

A. How Do I Lead a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)? 21

B. Designing a Focus Group Discussion Guide 23

C. Recording Participants' Responses: Using the FGD Answer Sheet 25

D. Using the FGD Analysis Form 26

E. Data Analysis 29

VI Individual Interview Techniques 31

A. How Do I Lead an Individual Interview? 31

B. Designing an Individual Interview Discussion Guide 32

C. Recording Participant Responses: Using the Answer Sheet 34

D. Using the Individual Interview Analysis Form 36

VII Expert Review 39

VIII Final Thoughts 41

IX Appendix I: Sample Discussion Questions 43
Appendix II: Blank Forms 49

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is one in a series of practical booklets designed by AIDSCAP's Behavior Change Communication (BCC) Unit.

Its main objective is to help field level planners and implementors conduct simple, effective pretests of BCC materials for HIV/AIDS prevention.

This handbook will help you:

- ▶ **Understand** what pretesting is and why it is important.
- ▶ **Learn different** methods of pretesting.
- ▶ **Determine** whether materials are easily readable.
- ▶ **Design and conduct** simple, effective testing surveys.
- ▶ **Analyze and use** pretest information to improve materials.

Specific issues such as target group identification, project design, project evaluation and development of BCC materials are not covered in this handbook. For guidance see the following AIDSCAP handbooks:

How To Create An Effective Communication Project

Behavior Change Through Mass Communications

Assessment and Monitoring of BCC Interventions

How to Create an Effective Peer Education Project

PRETESTING

A. What is Pretesting?

Pretesting is a process for determining a target group's reaction to and understanding of health messages or behavior change information **before** materials are produced in final form.

Pretesting is not research to help you understand the audience. That is called formative research. Conduct formative research on your target audience before developing a BCC project.

During **pretesting**, members of the target group are asked to react to draft BCC materials. Their responses are analyzed, then the materials are revised. **Pretesting** may be conducted several times **before** final materials are produced.

B. Why Pretest BCC Materials?

Pretesting tells you whether messages and materials are appropriate. It helps ensure that your materials contain understandable language, appropriate illustrations and effective messages.

Pretesting with your target group can tell you whether the language, pictures, music and messages in your HIV/AIDS materials are:

- ▶ Understandable
- ▶ Culturally appropriate
- ▶ Believable and realistic
- ▶ Acceptable to the audience
- ▶ Visually appealing
- ▶ Informative
- ▶ Motivational

Another important reason to pretest is that people who develop BCC materials may be more educated than the people for whom the materials are intended. Pretesting will help overcome this difference.

C. When Should I Pretest?

Pretesting begins after a first draft of the BCC material has been developed. It can be done several times during the materials development process as you refine and revise each draft. Pretesting ends when you are satisfied that the target audience understands the messages correctly.

D. Pretesting: Myth vs. Fact

There are myths which discourage health workers from pretesting materials and messages. Consider the myths on the next page:

PRETESTING MYTHS and FACTS

Myth #1	*Pretesting is too expensive and time-consuming.*
Fact	Pretesting can save the project money and time by assuring that the target group understands materials and responds favorably to the messages. Correcting controversial or ineffective materials after they have been produced is very expensive and time-consuming.
Myth #2	*The target group will not be able to give useful feedback on draft materials since the information is new to them.*
Fact	Target group members can tell you whether the materials are understandable, clear and appealing.
Myth #3	*Only written materials need to be pretested.*
Fact	All aspects of BCC materials require pretesting. This includes words, illustrations, photographs, videos, music and graphics. If people cannot understand the pictures or graphics, or do not like them, the message can be lost.

E. Pretesting Methods

The two most common pretesting methods are individual interviews and focus group discussions. Readability testing and expert review are also used.

1) **Individual Interviews** are one-on-one interviews where discussion between one interviewer and one participant takes place in a private, confidential setting.

2) **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** are small group gatherings (8-10 people per session) where the materials and messages are discussed in a group setting.

3) **Readability Assessments** help determine the level of reading difficulty of a written material. This is done during the materials development process **before** pretesting with the target audience.

4) **Expert Review** involves asking experts to review the draft materials and give comments and suggestions for improvements.

Both individual interviews and focus group discussions can give satisfactory results. To select the most appropriate method, consider the following questions:

- ▶ Do I have the time and the personnel to conduct 10-20 individual interviews?
- ▶ Can I organize people to meet for focus group discussions (2-4 FGDs with 8-10 people each)?
- ▶ Which method would be most comfortable for the respondents? (Some people may not like discussing sensitive issues such as sex and HIV in a group. Others may feel too shy to talk in a one-to-one situation.)
- ▶ Are skilled focus group discussion facilitators and notetakers available?

F. How Many People Should Participate in the Pretest?

The number of people may vary according to your situation. However, in many cases ten to twenty individual interviews will give you adequate information. If you are using the focus group discussion method, two to four focus groups with eight to ten people will probably give you enough feedback.

READABILITY

A. What Does Readability Mean?

A readability test can indicate the level of reading difficulty of print materials. It is done **before** materials are pretested with the target audience.

Studies show that materials written at lower reading levels are easier to understand and remember even for highly literate audiences.

Below is an example:

- ▶ An HIV/AIDS prevention brochure is designed for adults living in small towns in remote parts of Country X.
- ▶ The brochure contains some writing and a few drawings.
- ▶ Most adults in the target group have only primary school education and rarely have the opportunity to practice reading.
- ▶ A readability test is done on the brochure. The results show that the material has many long words and is suitable for secondary school graduates.
- ▶ We already know that most adults in the target audience have only a primary education. This material will be too difficult for most of them to read.
- ▶ The brochure is rewritten using simpler words and phrases. For example:

  Old: *Symptoms which have been associated with HIV infection range from the relatively benign to the extremely critical.*

  New: *People with HIV may feel healthy or very sick. They may have no symptoms, and few symptoms or many serious symptoms.*
- ▶ Another readability test is conducted, and the new results indicate that the brochure is now much easier to read and understand.
- ▶ When the brochure is pre-tested a greater number of adults will be able to read, understand and remember its message.

Remember:

The readability test in this handbook may not be appropriate for your language. Try it to see whether it gives an indication of the level of reading difficulty. If not, you should read your document and try to eliminate long sentences and long words. Do not write in a childish way, but do write in a way that makes the message very clear even to people who rarely read.

B. How To Assess Readability Of Your BCC Materials

There are several methods of assessing the readability of written materials. This handbook has adapted one of the easiest methods — the SMOG Readability Formula.

The SMOG formula was developed to determine readability in the English language. The AIDSCAP adaptation used here has been tested with Spanish and three African languages. The results show that the SMOG formula is also a very good indicator of reading difficulty in these languages. Try it in your language to determine whether it will be a useful tool for you.

Below are instructions for assessing readability using the SMOG formula.

For written materials at least 30 sentences in length:

1. Select ten sentences near the beginning, in the middle, and near the end of the material.
2. You now have a sample of **30** sentences. Circle all the words containing three or more syllables in this sample (including repetitions of the same word).
3. Count the number of words circled.
4. Take this number and compare it to the SMOG Conversion Table to determine the estimated reading level of your material.

5. Estimate the educational level of the majority of your target group. Rewrite your text, if necessary, to the appropriate readability level for these readers.

SMOG Conversion Table*

Total Word Count of Words 3+ Syllables	Estimated Reading Level
0 - 6	low-literate
7 - 12	primary school
13 - 30	some secondary school
31 - 72	secondary school graduate
73+	university or post-graduate education

**Adapted from table developed by Harold C. McGraw, Office of Educational Research, Baltimore County Schools, Towson, Maryland*

Below is an example with 30 sentences. The first ten are taken from paragraphs at the beginning of a pamphlet. The other sentences come from the middle and the end of the same pamphlet.

All words with three or more syllables are printed in ***dark letters***. There are 26. The estimated reading level is "some secondary school". (See the SMOG Conversion Table above.)

10 sentences from the beginning of the pamphlet	A person who is HIV **positive** has HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. HIV **damages** the immune system, the part of the body that fights **infection**. Over time, the immune system becomes very weak. This stage of HIV is called AIDS. No one knows for sure when a person with HIV will get AIDS. HIV is **different** in **different** people. It can take a long time for HIV to make the person sick. Many people with HIV stay healthy for years. **Understanding** what it means to be HIV **positive** helps **everyone**. It helps people with HIV take the best care of themselves.
10 sentences from the middle of the pamphlet	The immune system is a key to staying healthy with HIV. A strong immune system can help fight **infection** and maintain **energy**. It can even repair damaged tissue. Eating well, resting, **exercising** and **reducing** stress all can help keep the immune system strong. A person with HIV can also take **medicines** to help stay healthy. **Medicines** can slow the spread of HIV, make the immune system stronger, or treat **infections**. A pregnant woman with HIV can take **medicines** to reduce the risk of passing HIV to her baby. Working with a health care **provider** to keep the body strong is an **important** part of staying healthy. The sooner a person finds out he or she has HIV, the better. To keep a strong immune system and a healthy body, a person with HIV needs to get plenty of rest.

10 sentences from the middle of the pamphlet	If you don't know **anyone** with HIV, you can still help. There are many things to be done in the fight against HIV and AIDS. People with HIV are not always treated fairly. Fear and myths can cause **discrimination** against people with HIV, their friends and their **families**. If you **understand** HIV and can explain it to others, you can help stop **discrimination**. Working to change unfair rules and laws can also help. Your local HIV/AIDS agency has **volunteer opportunities** for people who want to help teach others and assist people with HIV. Here are some things you could do. Join the annual AIDS walk. This event raises money for AIDS programs and research. Become a peer **educator** in a youth program.

For written materials less than 30 sentences in length:

1. Count all the words that have three syllables or more.
2. Multiply that number by 30.
3. Count the number of sentences in your materials.
4. Divide your answer from step #2 by the number of sentences.
5. Take that total number and compare it to the SMOG Conversion Table to determine the estimated reading level of your material.

Another Method to Assess Readability Level

If the SMOG formula does not seem to give a reliable indication of readability in your language, test the material on students who you believe have approximately the same level of education as your target audience. Ask six to ten children to read it aloud individually, so you can hear whether they can read the words. Then ask them to explain the meaning of what they have read. If they cannot, rewrite the material, eliminating long and difficult words and sentences.

PREPARATION

It is important to be prepared for the pretesting session. If you are professional, the test participants will respond seriously.

Preparation for pretesting involves:

- ▶ Preparing the materials to be tested
- ▶ Preparing the discussion guide
- ▶ Selecting and briefing focus group discussion leaders or individual interviewers
- ▶ Selecting and briefing notetakers
- ▶ Selecting the test site and arranging transportation, beverages and snacks
- ▶ Selecting test participants
- ▶ Providing for the participants

Here are tips and guidelines to help you prepare for pretesting.

A. Preparing the Materials

Draft materials do not have to be professionally produced for pretesting. It is a good idea to test two or more versions of each draft so respondents can tell you which version they prefer.

- ▶ If you are testing leaflets or brochures, make a photocopy for each person in a focus group discussion. If you are doing individual interviews, the same copy can be used for each person.
- ▶ If you are testing posters, one copy is enough. Cover all the words with paper (use paper clips) so that the respondents can first react to the illustrations.
- ▶ If you are testing radio or television materials, make sure the equipment is in good working condition and the audio is loud enough

to be heard by all the respondents. Also make sure you have a source of electricity or extra batteries (cells).

B. Preparing the Discussion Guide

Develop a discussion guide that is appropriate for the material being tested. Test the discussion guide with several people in the target audience to be sure that it is clear and asks the right questions. See **Appendix I** for sample discussion questions.

C. Selecting the Leaders or Interviewers

The leader is the person who facilitates the individual interviews or FGDs. A facilitator for a FGD should be skilled and experienced. Choose a person who is familiar with the materials to be tested.

D. Selecting Notetakers

For FGDs and individual interviews it is helpful to have a notetaker write down what is being said during the discussion. The notetaker also records the answers on an answer sheet.

Select a notetaker who can write quickly and knows the language of the respondents. Make sure the notetaker is familiar with the discussion guide before your interviews or discussions begin.

If you intend to record the interview, be sure you have extra batteries and tapes.

E. Selecting the Test Site

Choose a test location that is convenient for the test participants. Obtain permission to use the site if necessary. The following table shows several target groups and a selection of places where testing might be convenient for each group.

Target Group	Possible Testing Sites
Women Ages 20-54	Health clinics, market-places, communal water pipes, home compounds
Youth and Teens	Schools, youth centers, music shops, school sports events, school disco nights
Truck Drivers	Truck stops, motels, rest houses, bars and restaurants along major roads
Commercial Sex Workers	Truck stop areas, bars, discos, STD clinics

F. Selecting Test Participants

For individual interviews, select respondents who are from the target audience and have the time to talk to you. For FGDs, choose target audience members who share similar characteristics such as age, gender and educational background.

G. Providing for the Participants

Sometimes FGD or individual interview participants expect drinks or a snack to be provided to them. This may also be a nice way to thank them for their participation.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are often used when designing interventions to help you learn about the knowledge, beliefs and practices of the target audience. FGDs can also be used for pre-testing, although they require a skilled facilitator. If an experienced focus group discussion facilitator is not available, your pretests may be more accurate if you use the other methods discussed in this handbook.

A. How Do I Lead A Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?

Here are some basic points about leading an FGD:

- **Introduce yourself and the notetaker** to the group. Explain the reason for the focus group session and let participants know that their ideas will be valuable to your work.
- **Explain that notes will be taken** or the session will be recorded on a tape-recorder so that important comments and ideas can be remembered after the session is finished. Ask the group's permission to record comments and assure participants, if necessary, that their comments will be confidential.
- **Begin with an opening or welcoming statement** such as, "We are here today to discuss some posters on AIDS that we are designing for your community. We would like your opinions on these materials before we make any further changes in them." Opening with a statement assures the group that the session will be a conversation, not a school-like question-and-answer session.
- After the opening statement, **begin with the FGD discussion guide questions.** Try to keep the conversation focused but remain flexible. If the FGD is well organized, it will rarely last longer than one hour.

- At the end of the session, **help the group reach some final conclusions together.** Ask summary questions like, "So, can we say that four of you agree that the poster is promoting condom use? And six of you think the poster is telling us to throw away condoms and not use them?" This clarifies the discussion into clear statements that can easily be summarized.

- **Thank the participants** and, if possible, offer some refreshments at the close of the session. If you are doing several sessions per day, **give yourself a minimum of 30 minutes between sessions**. This allows the facilitator and the notetaker to get together immediately after the session to make sure all important comments were recorded by the notetaker. It also allows time to discuss any problems that may have occurred during the last session so that changes can be made for the next session.

Further suggestions for focus group leaders are listed below.

Suggestions for the FGD Leader *	Examples
Avoid asking personal questions. Instead, ask questions that allow the participants to give their opinion of how others will react.	"Do you think your neighbors will understand this picture?" "What do you think other truck drivers will think of when they see this poster?" "What do others in your village think about using condoms?"
Use silence to your advantage.	Wait a few moments to see whether anyone will start talking again. If not, say, "Does anyone have anything else you want to add to that?"
Use close-ended questions when you want a short and exact answer.	"Do you like the people in the poster?" "Do these people look like they could be your neighbors?"

Suggestions for the FGD Leader *	Examples
Use open-ended questions to get longer, more thoughtful answers.	"What do you think this poster means?" "Can you suggest something that will make this poster better?"
Use probing questions as a follow-up after an open-ended question to help you understand why a participant responded a certain way.	"Why do you think this person has an STD?" "Why do you think this leaflet is meant for someone like you?"
Avoid leading questions which give the participants too much information and often hint that there is a correct answer.	"Have you heard that prostitutes can spread HIV because they have many sex partners?" "Do you think condoms are the best method for protection since they are the only way to protect yourself from STDs?"
Ask participants to explain comments based on myths and incorrect facts.	"Can you explain that to me?"

** Adapted from "Developing Health and Family Planning Print Materials for Low-Literate Audiences: A Guide," PATH, 1989.*

B. Designing a Focus Group Discussion Guide

Develop a discussion guide that covers all aspects of the materials being tested. This includes the message, drawings, photos, and graphics. On the next page is an example of a discussion guide for an FGD testing a poster. Your actual questions will vary, depending on what type of material you are testing and what the material's message is.

Appendix I contains sample discussion questions for several types of materials.

Sample Focus Group Discussion Guide for a Poster

Opening: "Welcome. My name is _____ and I am from the AIDS program. We are here today to ask for your ideas about some messages. I would like to show you some posters that may be used in your community. These posters are not finished because we want your opinions and thoughts on them first. Take a few minutes and look carefully at these posters." *Let participants take as much time as necessary.*

For questions one through four, cover the words on the poster so that the group can respond solely to the images.

1. Please tell me what you see in this picture. What does it look like to you?
2. What about the people in the picture? What do you think they are doing?
3. Do you think this poster is asking you to do anything in particular? What?
4. Do the people in the picture remind you of your friends, or are these people different from your friends? Why?

Uncover the words.

5. Are there any words that you do not understand? What are they?
6. Now, in your own words, what do you think is the message in this poster?
7. Is there anything about the picture or the writing that might offend or embarrass some people? What?
8. Is there anything on this poster that you really like? What?
9. Is there anything on this poster that you don't like? What?
10. Is there anything on this poster that is confusing? What?
11. What do you think can be done to make this a better poster?

Ask the above questions for each version of the poster, then ask this question:

12. Which version of this poster do you prefer? Why?

Remember:

A meaningful pre-test requires a good discussion guide. Pretest the discussion guide with a few members of the target audience to make sure that it asks all the important questions.

Remember:

Make sure that the questions are asked in a kind and friendly way that encourages people to be thoughtful and honest.

C. Recording Participant Responses: Using the FGD Answer Sheet

In an FGD, the facilitator leads the discussion and the notetaker records the group's opinions and summarizes the answers. The answer sheet has the same questions as the discussion guide with extra space so that the notetaker can write a clear summary of the answers to each question.

On the next page is an example of a completed FGD answer sheet. It shows only the first four questions from the sample discussion guide for a poster on the previous page. A blank copy of the FGD answer sheet can be found in **Appendix II**.

Sample FGD Answer Sheet

Focus Group Discussion Answer Sheet for: Condom Poster **Focus Group #:** 1 **# of people in group:** 10

Question #: 1 Please tell me what you see in this picture. What does it look like to you?

Response: Eight participants said that they saw a man handing a woman some condoms. Two participants thought the condoms were something else.

Question #: 2 What about the people in the picture? What do you think they are doing?

Response: Nine participants said that the woman was buying the condoms. One participant said the woman was returning the condoms.

Question #: 3 Do you think this poster is asking you to do anything in particular?

Response: Four participants said the poster was telling them to buy condoms. Five participants said the poster wasn't telling them anything. One participant did not know whether the poster was telling him anything or not.

Question #: 4 Do the people in the picture remind you of your friends, or are these people different from your friends?

Response: Five participants said the people did remind them of their friends. Five participants said the people were different—specifically, they thought that the woman was a commercial sex worker.

D. Using the FGD Analysis Form

In order to analyze the responses from a focus group discussion, you need an analysis form and simple math. A blank copy of the FGD Analysis Form can be found in **Appendix II**.

Remember:

Answers will be simplified in different ways. Example: FGD Question #3 could be simplified to the following categories: use condoms/do not use condoms/do not know.

Below is a sample FGD Analysis Form. There are three possible answers to the first question: **understood/misunderstood/understood partially**. To fill in the FGD Analysis Form, follow the steps below.

Focus Group #	1	2	3	4	Total	Percent
Question #: 1 Please tell me what you see in this picture. What does it look like to you?						
Response Categories:						
1) understood	8					
2) misunderstood	2					
3) understood partially	0					
Total	10					

Step 1: Use column 1 since this focus group is the first one. The answers from the second focus group will go into column 2, and the answers from the third FGD will go in column 3, etc.

Step 2: The 8 (for the eight people who understood the picture correctly) is put into the row marked **understood**.

Step 3: The 2 (for the two people in the group who misunderstood the picture completely) is put in the row marked **misunderstood**.

Step 4: There were no people in this group who identified only part of the picture correctly, so we place a zero in the row marked **under-**

stood partially.

Step 5: Fill in the remainder of the analysis form for question #1. In the example below, four FGDs were conducted.

Focus Group #	1	2	3	4	Total	Percent
Question #: 1 Please tell me what you see in this picture. What does it look like to you?						
Response Categories:						
1) understood	8	10	8	6	32	80%
2) misunderstood	2	0	3	3	8	20%
3) understood partially	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	10	10	1	9	40	100%

Step 6: After you fill in the responses for question #1 from all the focus groups, add up each row and place that number in the total column. In the example, 32 people understood the picture correctly, 8 misunderstood the picture, and none partially understood the picture. In this example, there was a total of 40 people in all the FGDs.

Step 7: To determine the percentages simply take the total number of each row (such as 32 from the understood row) and divide each by the total number of participants (40 in this case).

32 ÷ 40 = 0.8

Step 8: Then, multiply that answer by 100 to get the group percentage. Record this number in the percent column.

0.8 x 100 = 80

We now know that 80% of the participants understood the picture correctly.

Now we will determine the percentage of people who interpreted the picture incorrectly.

8 ÷ 40 = 0.2 and 0.2 x 100 = 20

We now know that 20% of the participants misunderstood the picture.

E. Data Analysis

Fill in the FGD Analysis Form for each question on the Focus Group Discussion Answer Sheet. Then review the percentages. Usually, if you find that more than 70% of the participants respond favorably to a question, you can consider successful. If less than 70% of the participants respond favorably to a question, revise that part of your material and conduct another pretest.

Another Example: Ninety percent (90%) of the participants correctly identified that the woman in the poster was buying some condoms. Fifty percent (50%) of these same people thought that the woman was a CSW and that the poster was not asking them to do anything. These test percentages tell you that the **situation** has been drawn well but that the **woman** needs to be re-drawn so that members of the target audience will realize that the message is meant for them.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

An individual interview is a discussion with one person about the material and its messages. In most cases, ten to twenty individual interviews will be enough for a good pretest. Participants in individual interviews should not have been involved in earlier FGDs.

There are two types of individual interviews:

▶ **Intercept Interviews:**

These are **unscheduled** interviews which occur in places where target group members are commonly found. As target group members pass by, the interviewer asks if they have time to participate in a brief interview.

▶ **Planned Interviews:**

These are interviews that are scheduled in advance but also take place in locations that are frequented by the target group. The advantage of this type of interview is that people have planned to be interviewed and have more time to think about and discuss the materials.

A. How Do I Lead An Individual Interview?

Tips on Beginning Intercept Interviews

The main difference between an **intercept interview** and a **planned interview** is how it begins. Below are some basic steps to follow when using the intercept interview technique:

1) **Begin the intercept interview by stopping people who look like they are in your target group.** Explain that you are testing some materials and would like to ask their opinion.

2) **Next, find out if the person is in your intended target group**

by asking simple questions.

Example: You are looking for married women between the ages of 17 - 35, so first ask the age and marital status of the woman. If she is **not** the correct age or is **not** married, then thank her for her time and end the interview. If the woman is in the correct age group and is married, take her aside to continue the interview.

3) **Conduct interviews in a private place.** You could hang sheets from a tree to create a more private atmosphere, or interview the person away from crowded areas.

From this point on, the **intercept interview** and the **planned interview** continue in the same way.

Tips on Conducting Individual Interviews

Here are some guidelines for proceeding with both individual interviews and intercept interviews.

1) **Begin the interview by introducing yourself and the notetaker to the participant.** Let the participant know that the notetaker will be recording his or her responses. Tell the participant that his or her name will not be used and that the conversation is confidential.
2) Respondents may want to give the answers that will make you happy. **Don't lead them to the "correct" answer** with your smile or your attitude.
3) After asking all the questions on the questionnaire, **thank the participant** for his or her assistance.
4) **Provide refreshments for participants.** It is a nice way to thank them for their participation in the testing process.

B. Designing an Individual Interview Discussion Guide

You must develop a discussion guide which covers all aspects of the materials being presented, including the message and drawings, photos, and graphics. Below is a sample Individual Interview Discussion Guide for a radio spot or jingle. The questions you ask will vary, depending on what type of material you are testing and what the material's message is.

Appendix I contains sample discussion questions for other types of materials.

Sample Individual Interview Discussion Guide for a Radio Spot or Jingle

Opening: "Welcome. My name is _____ and I am from the AIDS program. We are here today to ask for your ideas in how to get messages to people like yourself. I would like to play a radio message that may be used in your community. We want to get your opinions and thoughts on it." *Play the message twice.*

1. Who are the people in this radio message?
2. Can you hear and understand what they are saying?
3. Do you think the radio message is asking you to do something? What?
4. Is there anything in the message that you do not believe? What?
5. Does the radio message say anything that might offend anyone in your community? What?
6. What do you think you'll remember best about this radio message?
7. Do you think the message is meant for people like yourself, or is it for other people? Why?
8. In your own words, what do you think is the message of this radio spot?
9. Is the music appropriate for this radio message? Why?
10. Is there anything about the radio message that you particularly like? What?
11. Is there anything about the radio message that you do not like? What?
12. Is there anything in this radio message that is confusing? What?
13. Do you have any suggestions for making this a better radio message?

Ask the above questions for each version of the radio spot, then ask this question:

14. Which version of this radio message do you prefer? Why?

Remember:

Make sure that the questions are asked in a kind and friendly way that encourages people to be thoughtful and honest.

C. Recording Participant Responses: Using the Individual Interview Answer Sheet

Copy the blank Individual Interview Answer Sheet found in **Appendix II** and write each question on it. The interviewer or the notetaker can record the respondent's answers on this answer sheet.

Remember:

For individual interviews, you will use one answer sheet for each respondent.

Notice that most questions begin with a close-ended question that is answered with a **yes/no/do not know** answer. Others may be answered with another response such as **understood/ misunderstood/partially understood**. Then the interviewer asks a probing question to get more information from the participant. The notetaker should write a brief summary of the participant's answer.

On the next page is an example of an individual interview answer sheet. It shows only question #3 from the sample discussion guide on page **33**.

Sample Individual Interview Answer Sheet

Individual Interview Answer Sheet for: Condom Promotion Radio Message **Participant:** #1

Target Group: Married Women

Question #: 3 Do you think the radio message was asking you to do something? If yes, what?

Yes ☑ No ❑ Do not know ❑

Response: Use condoms.

Refer to question #3 above, from the sample individual interview discussion guide.

It shows only one participant's answer.

The person above knew that the radio spot was "telling me to use condoms." In this case **yes** should be marked.

If a participant didn't know, **no** would be marked.

If a participant wasn't certain, **do not know** should be marked.

As with the FGD Answer Sheet, there is space to explain the participants' answers.

D. Using the Individual Interview Answer Sheet

To analyze the responses use an Individual Interview Analysis Form and simple math. (A blank copy of the Individual Interview Analysis Form can be found in **Appendix II**.)

In order to explain how to use the analysis form, we continue with question #3 from the sample individual interview answer sheet on page 35. For this example, assume that you conducted **15 individual interviews.**

Sample Individual Interview Analysis Form

	Total	Percent
Question #: 3 Do you think the radio message was asking you to do something? If yes, what?		
Response Categories:		
1) Yes	9	60%
2) No	3	20%
3) Do not know	3	20%

Step 1: Count the number of respondents who said yes to question #3. Since nine respondents said yes, place a 9 under total for yes. Write a brief summary of these responses on the lines next to yes.

Step 2: Add up all the people who said **no** to question #3. Since there were three people who said **no,** place a 3 under total for **no**. Write a brief summary of these responses on the lines next to **no**.

Step 3: Finally, count all the people who **did not know**. There were three, so put a 3 under total for **do not know.** Write a brief summary of these responses on the lines next to **do not know**.

Step 4: To determine the percentages, take each number and divide it by the total number of participants in the test. For question #3, there were nine **yes** responses, so divide nine by fifteen (the total number of participants).

9 ÷ 15 = 0.6

Step 5: Then multiply that answer by 100 to get the percentage of participants who said **yes.** Record this number in the percent (%) column for **yes**.

0.6 x 100 = 60 %

Sixty percent of participants said **yes** to question #3.

Step 6: Figure and record the percentages for those who said **no** to question #3:

3 ÷ 15 = 0.2 , and 0.2 x 100 = 20 %

Twenty percent of participants said **no** to question #3.

Step 7: Figure and record the percentages for those who said **do not know** to question #3:

3 ÷ 15 = 0.2 , and 0.2 x 100 = 20 %

Twenty percent of participants said **do not know** to question #3.

After analyzing all the questions, review the results to see how many participants understood and liked the material. You can also see how many people misunderstood or did not like the material. Make appropriate revisions if necessary and pretest again.

EXPERT REVIEW

In addition to members of the target audience, there are many other talented people who may have interesting suggestions for improving the material. Ask them for their advice.

An expert review can be done with a committee of experts who meet for the purpose of discussing the material. If you have an expert committee meeting it probably will not last longer than two hours. You can also ask experts to review the material individually.

Ask **content experts** to review your material. They can tell you whether the information is factually correct and may be able to give expert opinions on the appropriateness of the message for your target group. They may also have experience with similar materials and give you hints about which ones successfully conveyed the information and which did not. Ask them questions like these:

- Is there any new information that contradicts the information here (in this leaflet or radio spot)?
- Can you suggest a better way to present this information?
- If you were developing this material for the target audience, what changes would you make in the words? In the illustrations? In the music/sound?

Production experts are also helpful. They may be able to help you improve the way your materials look or sound. Ask them questions like these:

- ▶ Will these colors show up on the poster?
- ▶ Is this print large enough to attract people?
- ▶ Is there enough white space on this page?
- ▶ Is the border of the page large enough?
- ▶ Is the music too loud or too soft?
- ▶ Does the radio announcer speak clearly? Does he speak too quickly? What suggestions do you have to make this spot better?

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Always pretest. Testing is the only way you can tell whether your materials are appropriate before you mass produce them. Pretest a material to be sure it is the best it can be before mass production and distribution.
- Look for trends. Do not focus on the reactions and comments of one individual. Instead, look for patterns of agreement among the respondents.
- Be sensitive to cultural issues. Make revisions if respondents raise concerns that the messages, images, music or spokespeople are offensive or inappropriate. When testing a material in different languages, look for feedback and corrections regarding the grammar, tone, style and pronunciation of the translations.

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This section contains some sample discussion questions for testing pamphlets, posters, and radio and television spots. You need to adapt these questions, and add others, based on the design and content of your material. Remember to ask probing follow-up questions in order to clarify answers when necessary.

Suggestions for Testing Pamphlets

*Ask these questions about each **page** of the pamphlet.*

1. Are there any words on this page that you do not understand? What are they?
2. Is there anything on the page that you do not believe to be true? What?
3. What about the picture on this page? What does it look like to you?
4. Is there anything about the pictures or the writing on this page that might offend or embarrass some people? What?
5. Is there anything on this page that you really like? What?
6. Is there anything on this page that you don't like? What?
7. Is there anything on this page that is confusing? What?

*Ask these questions about the **entire pamphlet**:*

8. Do you think this pamphlet is asking you to do anything in particular? What?
9. Do you think the pamphlet is meant for people like yourself, or is it for other people? Why?
10. What do you think this pamphlet is saying?
11. What do you think can be done to make this a better pamphlet?

*Ask the above questions for **each version of the pamphlet**, then ask this question:*

12. Which version of this pamphlet do you prefer? Why?

Suggestions for Testing Posters

*For questions one through four, cover the words on the poster so that the group can respond only to the **images**.*

1. Please tell me what you see in this picture. What does it look like to you?
2. What about the people in the picture? What do you think they are doing?
3. Do you think this poster is asking you to do anything in particular? What?
4. Do the people in the picture remind you of your friends, or are these people different from your friends? Why?

*Uncover the **words**.*

5. Are there any words that you do not understand? What are they?
6. Now, in your own words, what do you think this poster is saying?
7. Is there anything about the picture or the writing that might offend or embarrass some people? What?
8. Is there anything on this poster that you really like? What?
9. Is there anything on this poster that you don't like? What?
10. Is there anything on this poster that is confusing? What?
11. What do you think can be done to make this a better poster?

*Ask the above questions for **each version of the poster**, then ask this question:*

12. Which version of this poster do you prefer? Why?

Suggestions for Testing Radio Spots

Ask these questions after playing the radio spot twice:

1. Who are the people in this radio message?
2. Can you hear and understand what they are saying?
3. Do you think the radio message is asking you to do anything in particular? What?
4. Is there anything in the message that you do not believe? What?
5. Does the radio message say anything that might offend anyone in your community? What?
6. What do you think you'll remember best about this radio message?
7. Do you think the message is meant for people like yourself, or is it for other people? Why?
8. In your own words, what do you think is the message of this radio spot?
9. Is the music appropriate for this radio message? Why?
10. Is there anything about the radio message that you particularly like? What?
11. Is there anything about the radio message that you do not like? What?
12. Is there anything in this radio message that is confusing? What?
13. Do you have any suggestions for making this a better radio message?

Ask the above questions for ***each version of the radio spot****, then ask this question:*

14. Which version of this radio message do you prefer? Why?

Suggestions for Testing Television Spots

Ask these questions after showing the television spot twice:

1. Who are the people in this television spot?
2. What do you think the people were doing?
3. Where do you think they were? What else was going on?
4. Do you think the television spot was asking you to do anything in particular? What?
5. Is there anything in the spot that you do not believe?
6. Does the television spot say anything that might offend anyone in your community? What?
7. Do you think the spot is meant for people like yourself, or is it for other people? Why?
8. In your own words, what do you think the message was?
9. Is there anything about the television spot that you particularly liked? What?
10. Is there anything about the television spot that you did not like? What?
11. Is there anything in this television spot that was confusing? What?
12. Do you have any suggestions for making this a better television spot?

If you can afford to test multiple versions of your television spot, ask the above questions for ***each version of the television spot****, then ask this question:*

13. Which version of this television spot do you prefer? Why?

APPENDIX II: FORMS

These are blank copies of the FGD and Individual Interview Answer Sheets and Analysis Forms. Make copies to use for your pretests.

Focus Group Discussion Answer Sheet

FGD Answer Sheet for: _____ **Focus Group #:** _____ **# of people in group** _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Question #: _____

Response: _____

Focus Group Discussion Analysis Form

FGD Analysis Form for: _____

Focus Group #	1	2	3	4	Total	Percent
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____

Focus Group #	1	2	3	4	Total	Percent
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Question #: _____						
Response Categories:						
1) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
2) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
3) _____	__	___	___	___	_____	_____
Total	__	___	___	___	_____	_____

Individual Interview Answer Sheet

Individual Interview Answer Sheet for: _____ **Target Group #:** _____ **Participant #:** _____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Question #: _____

_____

_____ ❑ _____ ❑ _____ ❑

Response: _____

_____

Individual Interview Analysis Form

Individual Interview Analysis Form for: _____ **Target Group #:** _____ **Participants #:** _____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____

Question #: _____

Response Categories:	**Total**	**Percent**
1) _____	_____	_____
2) _____	_____	_____
3) _____	_____	_____