



**ESS INTERVIEWER BRIEFING:
BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND 'ESS
SCENARIOS'
(Round 7, 2014/15)**

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Introduction

Some basic requirements for training ESS interviewers are provided in the 'ESS Round 7 specification for participating countries' and in the Round 7 Project Instructions.

This document is intended to accompany the 'Annotated Source Questionnaire for use in Example Briefing Interview'. During interviewer briefings, all interviewers are expected to use the annotated questionnaire to practice as a group, taking turns to ask questions. Before the example briefing interview, interviewers should also be provided with a number of examples of how to deal with different types of respondents during doorstep interaction (to try to persuade them to take part in the survey), as well as some 'ESS scenarios'. These scenarios cover different situations that have arisen during previous ESS interviews. This document outlines these scenarios and provides points for discussion, as well as guidance on what interviewers should do.

Best practice guidelines for ESS interviewers

The ESS adheres to the principles of standardized interviewing. The goal of standardized interviewing is that differences in the answers of respondents reflect differences between respondents' attitudes rather than differences in how they were asked the questions or how their answers were recorded. The role of the interviewer is key to achieving this. When interviewers behave differently, in terms of how they ask a question, react to the respondent, or record the respondent's answer, 'error' is introduced to the data and can affect the results of the survey⁴.

To keep this error to a minimum in the ESS, it is essential that all interviewers follow the same basic guidelines. These best practice guidelines are outlined below⁵.

Doorstep interaction guidelines:

1. The interviewer should look at the person who opens the door; be friendly, cheerful and interested.
2. The interviewer should speak clearly and not too quickly (particularly if speaking over an intercom).
3. With a sample of named individuals, the interviewer should check whether the person to be interviewed lives at that address. The survey should be introduced to the person to be interviewed, not to a third person (the 'gate-keeper') who happens to open the door. The interviewer should emphasize that the interview is intended for the respondent only.
4. With an address-based sample, the interviewer should try to explain and apply the method for selecting the respondent indoors rather than on the doorstep.
5. The interviewer should try to avoid the gate-keeper refusing on the respondent's behalf.
6. If the interviewer manages to speak to the target respondent, they should introduce themselves (showing their identity badge if the respondent asks for it or is suspicious), refer to the introduction letter, and briefly state the reason for the visit.

⁴ Fowler, F. J. & Mangione, T. W. (1990) Standardized Survey Interviewing: Minimizing Interviewer-Related Error. California: Sage Publications Ltd.

⁵ Some of these guidelines are adapted from the SHARE 2010 Interviewer Project Manual version 4.3

7. The introduction at the door should be as general and as brief as possible.
8. The interviewer should not ask any questions that can easily prompt a negative answer (e.g., “can you spare a few minutes?”).
9. The interviewer should not give up too easily, but not be too pushy either. It is better to obtain an appointment than a refusal!
10. When making an appointment, the interviewer should ask for the respondent’s telephone number. The interviewer should do their absolute best to keep to any appointment made.

General interview guidelines:

11. The interview should take place in a quiet environment with as few distractions as possible. If possible, only the interviewer and the respondent should be present in the interview setting. If someone other than the respondent is present, the interviewer should explain that it is best for the respondent to be interviewed alone. This helps to ensure that the respondent is focused on the questions being asked, and that their responses are not influenced by someone else’s presence.
12. The interviewer should never let the respondent see the computer screen (or paper questionnaire if conducted in PAPI). This helps to ensure that all respondents have the same ‘stimulus’ – i.e. all respondents hear the question and (where appropriate) read the showcard.
13. The interviewer should begin the interview with a brief summary of the survey. It may be useful to point the respondent towards the introductory letter provided by the survey agency. The interviewer should highlight that the respondent’s name and personal details will be treated as strictly confidential, and that all responses will be anonymous. The interviewer should explain that the interview should take around an hour to complete. They could also explain that at some questions the question and possible response options will be read out to the respondent; at others the question will be read out and the respondent will be asked to choose their answer from a showcard. When the interviewer has answered any queries the respondent may have, the interview should begin.

Asking questions:

14. Questions should be read exactly as written in the questionnaire, i.e. the interviewer must not skip or change words. This helps to ensure that all respondents are asked exactly the same question. The questions should be read clearly and at a slightly slower than conversational pace. Respondents should have sufficient time to think and answer each question.
15. Whenever a question begins with **CARD X**, the interviewer should ensure that the respondent has the correct showcard in front of them.
16. The interviewer should never make assumptions about the respondent’s answers, e.g. by skipping a question or starting a question with “I know this probably doesn’t apply to you, but...” This sort of phrase could influence a respondent’s answer.
17. Before accepting the respondent's answer, the interviewer must be sure that the respondent has heard the entire question. This is important for helping to ensure that all concepts in the question are being considered by the respondent. If the respondent interrupts the interviewer before hearing the whole question, the question should be repeated to ensure the respondent hears it through to the end. This

helps to ensure that all respondents hear exactly the same question, including the same response options.

18. Where response options appear in brackets, these should NOT be read out to respondents. For example, “don’t know” should not be read out to respondents. This code should only be used when the respondent says “don’t know”.

Reacting to respondents’ answers:

19. The interviewer should try to remain neutral in their reactions to the respondent’s answers, or to the questions, i.e. take care not to sigh or laugh when reading the question, and never agree or disagree with respondents’ answers. This is important for helping to ensure the respondent’s answer is not influenced by the interviewer.
20. If the interviewer repeats a question, it should be re-read in the same words, i.e. as it appears in the questionnaire. The interviewer should not try to re-phrase the question.
21. If the respondent asks for repetition of response options, the interviewer must repeat all response options.
22. The interviewer should not give definitions of terms within a question if requested by the respondent (unless explicitly stated in an interviewer note or project instructions). This helps to ensure that all respondents are asked the same question. It is important to avoid respondents being given different definitions of terms.
23. If the respondent says “don’t know” the interviewer should accept this answer and move on to the next question.
24. If the respondent appears to contradict what he or she said earlier, the interviewer should accept this and move on to the next question.
25. The interviewer should never assume how to interpret an answer onto a scale. For numeric scales, the respondent should always be asked to provide the number themselves. It is important that the answers that are coded are those given by the respondent (rather than the interviewer’s interpretation of the respondent’s answer).
26. If the respondent starts to elaborate on their answers, digresses or attempts to engage the interviewer in conversation, the interviewer should use neutral feedback, such as silence, or a phrase such as “we have a lot of questions to get through, so let’s move on”.

Examples of how to deal with different types of respondents during the doorstep interaction

How the interviewer persuades a potential respondent to cooperate can be further illustrated and elaborated on based on the *different types of respondents*. The examples below are based on a number of frequently occurring reactions from respondents. For each type, the interaction is discussed and it is indicated how the interviewer can respond, given the principles set out above that may play a role in the decision-making process of the respondent. In every case, it is important that the interviewer responds in a creative and inventive manner to the different situations that may arise during the doorstep interaction. Contrary to the interaction during the interview, the doorstep interaction should not be standardized.

Reluctant and uninterested respondents

Respondent: *"I am not interested in that sort of study."*

Interviewer: *"That is what makes your answers even more important. This study will only reflect everyone's opinion if different types of people take part, which means: people who are very interested in this topic as well as people who are not interested."*

Respondent: *"I would never take part in that."*

Interviewer: *"This study will make it possible to gain a correct and thorough picture of people like you. This can be taken into account when specific measures are drawn up. You will understand that it is very important for us that you take part. We can also guarantee that your responses will be treated as strictly confidential. That is done by combining everyone's answers, which makes it impossible afterwards to discover what your specific replies were. Details like your name and address will not appear anywhere."*

Here, the respondent's reaction is addressed, but a reversal strategy is used (*even the opinions of people who are not very interested are important*). The interviewer could also point out the relevance of the study and emphasize that it is a confidential study (to reduce fear and put the respondent at ease). It can also be noted that the survey gives the respondent an opportunity to voice their opinion, and that most people find it interesting to take part in the study.

Very busy respondents

Respondent: *"I don't have time for that."*

"How long will it take?"

Interviewer: *"I understand that I have come at a bad time and that you are busy, but it is important that we also learn about the opinions of busy people. Let's make another appointment; it does not need to take up too much time, the main thing for us is that you take part..."*

A reversal strategy is also used on this occasion. The interviewer explicitly addresses the respondent's argument (*I understand that you have little time*). The argument of the respondent is taken seriously, but the argument is used to formulate a counterargument (*it is important to find out the opinions of busy people*).

It is impossible for the interviewer to know what activity the respondent was engaged in, and they may be busy with something important. It is therefore advisable not to be pushy. If the respondent really does not have any time, it is better to spend effort on obtaining an appointment rather than engaging in persuasion that is likely to fail. Interviewers must never begin an interview when they know they will not have enough time to complete it. Correct information about the duration of the interview should be given.

Many people say that they don't have time, simply to get rid of the interviewer. If the interviewer thinks this is the case, they can reassure the respondent that it won't take very long. They can make an estimate of the average duration of the interview, remarking that in the case of the respondent the interview will probably take less time, that way reducing the cost to the respondent. The respondent may therefore wish to do something in return and grant the request for cooperation. The interviewer should be careful not to use the caveat that the interview won't take long 'if you give your full cooperation'. This may scare off the respondent because it means that there is a good and a bad way to undergo an interview. It is better for the interviewer to say they are very familiar with the questionnaire and that they can support the respondent to complete it. The interviewer must never make the respondent responsible for the duration of the interview.

Respondents with additional questions

Respondent: *"How did you come to choose me?"*

Interviewer: *"We are unable to interview everyone on this subject, so we need to select a number of people at random from the whole population. You have been randomly selected and we are unable to substitute you with someone else as this would bias the results."*

Respondent: *"What will you do with my answers?"*

Interviewer: *"After all the interviews have been completed, everyone's answers are combined to build up a general picture. It will be no longer possible at that stage to know which answers came from you and you cannot be identified from the data. I can assure you that any information you give us will be treated as strictly confidential."*

Asking questions is not usually a sign of reluctance, so it is not usually a sign of respondents being difficult. With respondents who ask questions, the interviewer can assume that they want to be reassured and to obtain information. When respondents see that an effort is being made to explain to them what it is about, they will be more willing to cooperate in exchange. If the respondent is distrustful of how their details were obtained, interviewers can reassure them that the research organization has the relevant authority to obtain a list of names/addresses. The interviewer can also emphasize the confidential nature of the study for further reassurance.

The 'ignorant' respondent

Respondent: *"I don't know anything about that."*

Interviewer: *"The survey is about what people think about a number of issues, such as... It is about your opinion and it does not require any special knowledge."*

Respondent: *"Why don't you ask my neighbour?"*

Interviewer: *"For our study, it is important to hear your opinion. You have been selected at random. Using this technique means that everyone has an equal chance of taking part in a survey, which means we get a truly representative picture of everyone in the country. We cannot substitute you with your neighbor as this would bias the results."*

Here, the respondent is also asking for reassurance. The interviewer must emphasize that the questions are about opinions (what do people think about something), rather than about knowledge (what do people know about something). If necessary, the interviewer could explain that most questions are closed questions, and that the range of answers will usually be provided for the respondent to choose from. The interviewer could also say they will help if the respondent gets into difficulties, though any help provided must of course be limited to actions that do not contravene the rules for standardized interviewing (see

guidelines provided above). The interviewer can also reassure the respondent that most people do not find the survey difficult. As far as any referrals to neighbors are concerned, a simple explanation can be given about the need to randomly select people to take part.

The 'veiled sales call'

Respondent: *"I don't buy anything at the door."*

Interviewer: *"This is a scientific study that does not involve any sales or advertising. I would like to ask you a few questions in relation to...
"I am an interviewer from..."*

People may refuse if they assume the visit is a sales call. It is important that the interviewer explains that this is not the case and that the respondent would be cooperating with a study about social sciences, which is definitely not for the purpose of selling something afterwards. It may also be helpful to assure respondents that their details will not be passed on to commercial organizations (the survey organization should advise interviewers on their policies regarding data protection). Mentioning the name of the agency or principal is often a reference for respondents and can reassure them of the interviewer's authority. Showing an identity badge and an information letter or leaflet (if available) may also help. The interviewer can mention a few topics that will be raised during the interview, which he/she thinks that the respondent will find interesting.

'Bad experience'

Respondent: *"Last time I took part in a survey it was a big disappointment."*

Interviewer: *"What exactly went wrong?"*

The interviewer should ask what went wrong on the previous occasion if the respondent has had a negative survey experience in the past. This gives a better insight into the best (tailored) arguments to use to persuade the respondent to take part. If a survey lasted too long last time, for example, this issue can be addressed by mentioning the correct expected duration. However, interviewers should take care not to discredit other researchers or studies.

Respondents in specific situations

Respondent: *"I am far too old for this."*

Interviewer: *"It is really important for us to learn about the opinions of all groups of people, young and old, male and female. We would really appreciate it if you would consider taking part in this study."*

The interviewer must point out that everyone's opinion matters, including that of older people. The interview can be presented as a unique opportunity to voice an opinion. The interviewer should mention the benefits of taking part in the survey, such as gaining a new experience and having a conversation about various themes the respondent probably has some experience of. With older people, the interviewer may need to speak more slowly and loudly, though without being patronizing. It is important to put the respondent at ease using one's identity badge and reference to the introductory letter if applicable.

Respondent: *"I'm too ill to take part."*

Interviewer: *"I am sorry that I am calling at such an inconvenient time. I can easily come back some other time. What would be a good day for you...? I hope you get better soon."*

With someone who is ill, the interviewer can propose to return another time. If the situation is not expected to improve during the fieldwork period, the interviewer should accept this and complete the contact form accordingly.

Respondent: *"I cannot take part in this because of my job."*

Interviewer: *"We would like to hear your opinion as a citizen. The information you provide is completely anonymous..."*

Some respondents will be reluctant to take part in opinion surveys because of their professional activity. For example, civil servants and police officers may not wish to cooperate with surveys on racism. With these people, it is important to emphasize anonymity: the respondent's name will not be seen by data users and will not be linked to their opinions. The interviewer could also explain that they would be participating as an ordinary citizen.

People from other cultures may also be suspicious of the interviewer. They may not be familiar with this type of research, or they may feel as though they have been specifically targeted because they belong to a specific culture. If this is the case, the interviewer can once again refer to the random sample selection and present the survey as an opportunity for the respondent to express their opinions.

ESS Scenarios

In the following few pages we set out some specific scenarios that may occur during an ESS interview. Further information should be provided during the briefing session on filling out contact forms, recording observable data, refusal conversion activities, etc. The purpose of this section of the briefing is to focus on standardized interviewing, to ensure that all ESS interviewers are trained to deal with certain scenarios in the same way.

These scenarios are not intended to be regarded as item-specific, but illustrate problems that may arise in actual interviews⁶. It is not expected that many complex problems would occur during an interview. This training is intended to prepare interviewers to deal confidently with problems that may arise.

For each scenario, the setting is explained and the dialogue is presented in red, bold text.

For each scenario observed, interviewers should discuss the following questions:

1. Was the interview carried out in a standardized manner? Referring to the best practice guidelines, which items were successfully carried out (refer to 'RULE X')?
2. Referring to the best practice guidelines, which items were not successfully carried out (refer to 'RULE X')?

⁶ These scenarios draw on some examples from audio tapes collected by each interviewer as part of interviewer evaluation in autumn 2010 (Round 5) in Belgium (Flanders). We thank Mr. Dries Tirry, National Coordinator of Flanders, in allowing us to make use of these useful observations from the audio tapes and evaluation materials.

Scenario 1: HOW TO START THE INTERVIEW

The interviewer visits the household after having set up an appointment. The interviewer rings the doorbell. The door opens. A woman appears at the door with a scary dog.

The interviewer shows his ESS badge and says **"Good afternoon, my name is H. I have an appointment with Mr. L for an interview. I believe he is at home"**.

The woman says **"Oh yes. We were waiting for you, please come in. My name is L, yes, Ms. L and I am Mr. L's partner. This lovely one is called Max"** (pointing towards the scary dog, who is making the interviewer feel uncomfortable).

The interviewer says **"Oh I see. Thank you very much"**.

The interviewer enters the house, then the hall, and then a living room.

Mr. L is waiting in the living room sitting in a wheelchair.

Ms. L sits down next to Mr. L with Max (on a leash).

Mr. and Ms. L smile at the interviewer. The interviewer smiles too, and sits down on the sofa as indicated by Ms. L's hand gesture. The interviewer opens his computer in front of them and puts the computer in front of them.

The interviewer says **"Okay, let us start with the first question. A1"**.

The following issues with scenario 1 should be addressed:

1. RULE 1: The interviewer should ensure that the interview is carried out in a quiet place where interruptions will be unlikely.
 - a. Neither Ms. L nor Max (the dog) should be present in the interview setting. The interviewer should either politely ask Ms. L and Max to leave the living room or propose another room so that there is only Mr. L and the interviewer in the interview setting.
2. RULE 2: The interviewer should never let the respondent see the computer screen (or paper questionnaire if conducted in PAPI).
 - a. The interviewer should open the computer or paper questionnaire discreetly, and not in front of Mr. L. It is helpful for the interviewer to sit close enough for the respondent to hear them clearly, but not so close that they can see the computer screen (or paper questionnaire).
 - b. The interviewer should give the showcards to Mr. L before the interview starts. Mr. L should also be told which showcard to refer to at each question (throughout the interview).
3. RULE 3: The interviewer should begin the interview with a brief summary of the survey.
 - a. The interviewer should highlight that Mr. L's name and personal details will be treated as strictly confidential, and that all responses will be anonymous. The interviewer should explain that the interview should take around an hour to complete. They could also explain that at some questions the question and possible response options will be read out to Mr. L; at others the question will be read out and Mr. L will be asked to choose his answer from a showcard. When the interviewer has answered any queries Mr. L may have, the interview should begin.

Scenario 2: QUESTION WITH SHOWCARD 1

After the interviewer optimizes the interview setting (see scenario 1), the interviewer reads out the first question (A1) to Mr. L.

A1 CARD 1 On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend watching television? Please use this card to answer.

No time at all	00	GO TO A3
Less than ½ hour	01	
½ hour to 1 hour	02	
More than 1 hour, up to 1½ hours	03	
More than 1½ hours, up to 2 hours	04	ASK A2
More than 2 hours, up to 2½ hours	05	
More than 2½ hours, up to 3 hours	06	
More than 3 hours	07	
(Don't know)	88	

The interviewer mumbles "**Ummmmm, let me read this. Ummmmm, on a weekday, ummmmm, how much time do you spend watching... (pointing to the TV)? Can you use the card?**"

Mr. L leans towards the interviewer so as to hear what the interviewer is saying.

The interviewer says "**Yes, this question is about how long you watch TV when you are at home, you know? I guess (looking at Mr. L) you are mostly at home? It could be more than 3 hours if you are at home all day?**"

Mr. L says "**I am at home a lot during the day**".

The interviewer says "**So would you say more than 3 hours?**"

The following issues with scenario 2 should be addressed:

1. RULE 4: Questions should be read at slightly slower than a conversation pace. Interviewers should speak clearly.
 - a. The interviewer should speak as clearly as possible. If it is obvious that Mr. L is struggling to hear the question the interviewer should repeat the entire question in a louder voice.
2. RULE 4: Questions should be read exactly as written in the questionnaire.
 - a. The interviewer should always read the question wording exactly as is it written, without deviation. In the example above, the interviewer replaced or missed several words from the question, e.g. 'average weekday', 'in total', 'do you spend watching television?'

3. RULE 6: The interviewer should never make assumptions about the respondent's answers.
 - a. In the example above the interviewer assumed that Mr. L spent a lot of time at home, and therefore would watch a lot of television. The interviewer must never direct or lead the respondent to a particular answer
4. RULE 4: Respondents should have sufficient time to think and answer each question.
 - a. In this example, the interviewer is not allowing Mr. L to consider the question properly before the interviewer tries to lead him to a response.
 - b. If Mr. L cannot give an answer after considering the question properly, the interviewer can accept a "don't know" response and move on to the next question (see RULE 13).
5. RULE 10: If the interviewer repeats a question, it should be re-read in the same words
 - a. In the example above the interviewer re-phrased the question in his own words when Mr. L failed to hear the first time. This is never allowed!
 - b. If Mr. L did not hear the question properly the interviewer should repeat the question clearly (exactly as it is written).

Scenario 3: HOW TO DEAL WITH SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

The interview progresses to section C.

C9 Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?

Yes	1	ASK C10
No	2	GO TO C11
(Don't know)	8	

C10 Which one?

Roman Catholic	01
Protestant	02
Eastern Orthodox	03
Other Christian denomination	04
Jewish	05
Islamic	06
Eastern religions	07
Other non-Christian religions	08

The interviewer says with a sigh **"Here is something about religion – I don't like asking this question, I think it's a personal thing"**.

Mr. L says **"That's OK"**.

The interviewer notes a crucifix on the wall of Mr. L's living room and says **"Maybe this is obvious, but do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?"**

Mr. L responds **"Well, you know, I think I do believe in God and I also pray. You know, last time, when my best friend passed away, I really thought..."** (Mr. L talks at length about his religious feelings).

Mr. L continues to speak, while the interviewer codes "1 - Yes" at C9 and "01 - Roman Catholic" at C10.

The following issues with scenario 3 should be addressed:

1. RULE 9: The interviewer should try to remain neutral in their reactions to the respondent's answers, or to the questions.
 - a. The interviewer's behaviour is inappropriate in this example. The interviewer should never indicate their own feelings about an issue, or about one of the questions in the survey.
 - b. The interviewer should also avoid sighing. Both these types of behaviour could influence Mr. L's response.
2. RULE 6: The interviewer should never make assumptions about the respondent's answers.
 - a. In this example it is inappropriate for the interviewer to make assumptions about Mr. L's religious beliefs based on the crucifix he sees on the wall of the living room.

- b. To avoid biasing the results of the survey, the interviewer should read the question as it is written (without introducing any unnecessary caveats, such as “maybe this is obvious...”) and let Mr. L provide an answer himself.
3. RULE 16: If the respondent starts to elaborate on their answers, digresses or attempts to engage the interviewer in conversation, the interviewer should use neutral feedback, such as silence, or a phrase such as “we have a lot of questions to get through, so let’s move on”.
 - a. Here, the interviewer should interrupt Mr. L politely and then repeat the question.
 - b. Mr. L has not answered the question in the format required. The interviewer should explain that the first question (C9) requires a ‘yes/no’ answer only. If question C10 is asked, the interviewer should ask Mr. L to choose an answer from the card if necessary (a showcard is used in some countries but not in others). If there is no showcard, the interviewer should ask Mr. L to state the name of his religion (as in the question).

Continuation of scenario 3

When C9 and C10 are read out to Mr. L, he responds **"Yes I really believe in God. I do belong to a religion "**.

The interviewer asks **"Which one?"**

Mr. L replies **"Well, my wife is Catholic, but I believe in Buddha, so from the card I would choose 'Eastern religions'. I went to Tibet five years ago and that really changed my entire belief system".**

This demonstrates the importance of letting the respondent answer a question without making assumptions about what their answer might be. In this example, the interviewer’s assumption would have led to an incorrect response being coded.

Scenario 4: QUESTION WITH SHOWCARD 2

The interview is now in section F.

ASK ALL WORKING/PREVIOUSLY WORKED

CARD 54 I am going to read out a list of things about your working life. Using this card, please say how much the management at your work allows/allowed you...**READ OUT...**

		I have/had complete control (Don't know)											
		I have/ had no influence											
F27	...to decide how your own daily work is/was organised?	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	88

The interviewer points to the pack of showcards and gestures for Mr. L to choose an answer.

Mr. L says **"Oh yes, I'm allowed to decide that"**.

The interviewer asks **"Is that 'complete control' or somewhere in the middle?"**

Mr. L replies **"I would say something slightly above the middle"**.

The interviewer says **"OK, I'll record code 7"**. The interviewer codes Mr. L's response as 7.

The following issues with scenario 4 should be addressed:

1. RULE 5: Whenever a question begins with **CARD X**, the interviewer should ensure that the respondent has the correct showcard in front of them.
 - a. The interviewer did not ensure that Mr. L had card 54 in front of him. It is essential that respondents choose an answer from the relevant showcard when required.
2. RULES 4 & 7: Each question should be read exactly as written in the questionnaire.
 - a. The interviewer did not read the question in this example! The full question wording must be read, i.e. "I am going to read out a list of things about your working life. Using this card, please say how much the management at your work allows/allowed you to decide how your own daily work is/was organised?"
 - b. Even if it seems possible to interpret the question from the showcard, the interviewer must always read out the full question wording.
2. RULE 15: The interviewer should never assume how to interpret an answer onto a scale.
 - b. The interviewer should never help to interpret the scale. By asking 'complete control' or 'somewhere in the middle', the interviewer in this example is imposing his own categories onto the scale. Unless specified in the question, the interviewer should not read out the scale. They should allow the respondent to use the showcard to choose an answer.

- c. In this example, the interviewer has interpreted Mr. L's response for him, by assuming that 'something slightly above the middle' would be code 7. How Mr. L interprets 'something slightly above the middle' in numeric terms may be completely different to how the interviewer interprets it.
- d. If a respondent gives an answer that is not on the showcard – for example, responds in words where a numeric value is required – the interviewer should simply ask them to choose their answer from the card.