

# THE A TO Z OF INFORMATION ELICITATION

**A** is for active listening, a technique that involves using a paraphrased summary of what the other person has said in order to show a willingness to listen, and give them the opportunity to correct any errors.

**B** is for baselining, and evidence showing that prior exposure to a person tends to facilitate our ability to identify truth-telling in a future encounter, but not necessarily our ability to identify deception.

**C** is for cognitive interview, an approach that encourages detailed, open-ended reporting and uses techniques that aid memory recall: by almost 80%. See the CREST website for our guide to the cognitive interview.

**D** is for decay, and the finding that information campaigns to counter telephone based social engineering attacks work after one week, but are useless after two weeks.

**E** is for educating, a word the US National Science Foundation chose over elicitation in their must-read and still very relevant 2006 report 'Educating information.' See page 8.

**F** is for flattery, and the fact that even blatantly insincere flattery — the kind spotted by its target — has been shown to improve cooperation and liking. You gorgeous reader, you.



**G** is for grouping, and the advantage that comes from interacting with two people simultaneously. They typically provide more detail (e.g., as they correct one another) and give away their deception more readily.

**H** is for heuristic, and research showing that we use proxies such as 'what others are doing' to determine our willingness to comply to requests.

**I** is for interpreter, whose demeanour, approach to translation, and even seating position has been shown to impact the amount of information a person reveals.

**J** is for judgement error – and the discovery that making an incorrect inference about a person's state of mind or motivation will reduce trust and cooperation, but also lead to greater information provision. Use sparingly!

**K** is for kindness, an approach that can backfire when used with high context cultures (e.g., Chinese, Russian) who can interpret it as patronizing and questioning their capacity.

**L** is for language and evidence showing that adopting the same words as another is enough to make them cooperate and like you more. It also predicts relationship stability.

**M** is for motivational frame, and evidence that shows people tend to frame issues through an identity, relational, or instrumental lens. Adopting the same frame is critical to cooperation.

**N** is for nonverbal behaviour, and evidence showing that a message accompanied by a nonverbal style that matches the preferred style of the recipient is more likely to be received positively and lead the recipient to desire to act as requested.

**O** is for open questions, the cornerstone of getting good information. Sir William Osler's 1898 dictum to medical students – "Listen to the patient, he is telling you the diagnosis" undoubtedly applies to security settings too.

**P** is for phishing, and evidence showing that we're more likely to click at certain times of day, such as just before lunch.

**Q** is for quality, as a reminder of the ever-present danger of mistaking quantity of information elicited with its quality. The former is useless if it is low in quality.

**R** is for rapport, and evidence showing that alleged terrorists in police interviews respond to interviewers who demonstrate empathy and acceptance, and who allow the interviewee autonomy in their account.

**S** is for strategic use of evidence, and data showing that withholding evidence until after you've asked specific questions about it provides a useful tool for detecting deception as liars have to continuously change their story.

**T** is for timeline technique, a structured debriefing method from Lorraine Hope that has been shown to increase the amount and detail of information about who did what, when, and with whom. See the CREST website for a guide to the Timeline Technique.

**U** is for undergraduates, which is still the group studied in most research on information elicitation. This is unfortunate, as recent research suggests common techniques do not work as well with interviewees of different ages and cultures.

**V** is for volunteering information, often known as self-disclosure, which when used carefully can encourage the disclosure of information in others.

**W** is for window, which is one thing that work on 'priming' shows can encourage disclosure when left open. The work shows that our behaviour is moderated by the context in which we find ourselves, so lots of cues to openness encourages cooperation.

**X** is for XSens, a technology that enables full-body motion tracking that has been used to allow investigators to watch back their behaviour when eliciting information from others. It has also proven more effective than the polygraph at identifying liars.

**Y** is for 'yes,' 'uh-huh,' 'ok', and all the other positive backfeeds that have been shown to encourage people to keep talking (and in so doing provide more information).

**Z** is for Zelig, a statistical measure of the degree to which a person is an interpersonal chameleon; the extent to which they adapt their behaviour to match the person with whom they interact. High Zelig's are more likable and often elicit cooperation as a result.