Interviewing without bias

Stage 2, Customers and value. Lesson U2.3. Sprint session 1.
How to talk to the people you want to serve so that you learn what is true, not what is polite.

Two things a seller said last week

01 "An app for this would be amazing."

02 "I pay my niece 300 CU a month to manage the messages and payments."

Ask the room: which statement would you bet money on, and for which claim? Reveal: the second shows what the problem costs today, not demand for a new offer.

People are kind. That is the problem.

01 Describe your idea and ask whether they would use it, and most people say yes, because no feels rude and the future is easy to promise.

02 That yes feels like validation and is worth almost nothing. It is an opinion about a future that may never arrive.

03 Building is cheap now. Knowing what is worth building is the scarce skill, and the interview is your main instrument for it.

Ask about their life, not your idea

01 Talk about the person's life and work, never about your idea. Do not pitch.

02 Ask about specific past occasions, not opinions, generalities or the future. "Tell me about the last time..."

03 Listen more than you talk. Silence is a question.

04 Ask about money, time and effort already spent, at least twice in every interview.

05 Record what you heard against a claim within an hour, in their words, with how you know it.

From a question that invites politeness to one that produces a story

Leading or hypothetical	Ask instead
"Would you use our app?"	"Has this happened to you? If yes, how did you handle the most recent occasion?"
"Do you think late payments are a problem?"	"Has a payment arrived later than you expected? Tell me about the most recent occasion."
"How much would you pay for our tool?"	"What do you currently spend, in time or money, handling this?"
"You must waste a lot of time, right?"	"How long did the most recent instance take? What made it take that long?"
"Do you like the idea of one dashboard?"	"Where do you look today to check what is happening?"

In pairs, rewrite the ten questions on your worksheet the same way. Check first that the situation has ever happened; "never" is a valid answer.

At least two in every guide, one about money actually spent

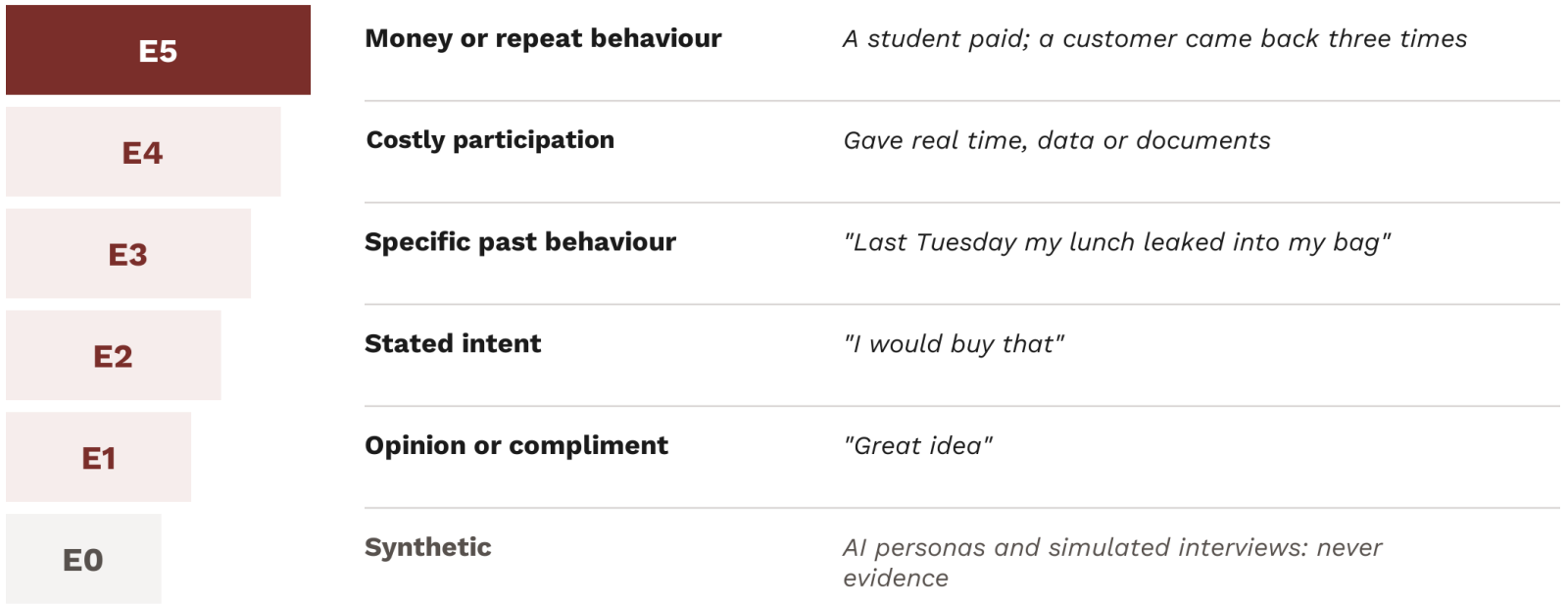
01 "Do you pay anyone or anything to help with this? How much a month?"

02 "How much time does this take in a normal week, and in a busy one?"

03 "Who decides whether to spend money on this?"

No current spending does not invalidate a creative venture; it tells you the value must be shown another way. Record what you found either way.

Levels describe commitment; they never decide support on their own



Support for a claim is judged by the item's level, its relevance to the claim, where it came from, and the pattern across items. A compliment is E1. A paid workaround is E5 for claim C3. Anything synthetic, including an AI practice persona, is E0.

Draft first. Critique second.

01 Write at most three learning goals, each tied to a claim, and the riskiest assumption your interviews test.

02 Derive the questions from the customer profile you believe in: their world, the last specific occasion, workarounds and their cost, money, who decides, how they looked for a fix.

03 Delete every banned form: "would you", "do you think", "how much would you pay", any description of your idea.

04 Then ask a peer, or your own AI assistant, to flag what is leading, hypothetical or a pitch. Keep or reject each suggestion with a reason, and log it.

What to do when you slip, and what to do within the hour

01 If you described your idea, note the minute. Anything said after it is stated intent at most, unless it comes with a real commitment.

02 "Usually" is not an answer. Ask "When was the last time? Walk me through it."

03 Write exact phrases. Quote them publicly only with that specific permission.

04 Within one hour, record each meaningful statement or observation against one claim: its level, observed or reported, and what it cannot show.

Useful, bounded, never evidence

01 Attempt first. The assistant critiques your draft guide; it does not write it.

02 A practice persona can rehearse you. It is synthetic, level E0, and never enters your evidence record.

03 Share only what the people you interviewed permitted. Private notes and reflections stay out of every briefing.

04 Write a short AI use note: what it did, what you kept, what you rejected, what you checked. "No AI used" is a valid note.

Your interviews start this week

01 Finish and rehearse your guide: eight to twelve questions, at least two about money, no banned forms.

02 Recruit people who fit your segment through more than one route; record the five permissions for each.

03 Run the interviews your venture type needs (at least ten for a consumer venture, eight for a business customer including three who pay or decide).

04 Enter each finding against a claim within an hour. Bring your ledger to the synthesis session.

Why is asking about the last actual purchase different from asking whether someone likes your idea?

Write your answer before you see the model response. Then compare, and note what you would change in your own guide.