

INTRODUCTION

This list of frequently asked questions and best practice has been compiled by drawing on the multi-disciplinary and multi-method expertise of the many researchers who comprise the EU Kids Online network (see Annex 2). Its purpose is to distil the knowledge, experience, and insights of those actively researching children's use of online technologies for the benefit of those entering or less familiar with this domain. It is intended to be useful to new researchers, to experienced researchers new to this domain, to those commissioning or evaluating research on children and online technologies, and to students and interested others.

The format of 'Frequently Asked Questions' has been chosen as this is how many researchers commonly express their need for knowledge and guidance.

The original list of questions was the result of work carried out by the EU Kids Online network in 2007, and aimed at identifying the range of questions most commonly asked. The network revised it in 2012, but as before, the selected questions have been organized according to the five main sequential steps of the research process, integrating qualitative and quantitative research considerations at each step. These five steps are:

- Designing the research
- Sampling and recruitment of participants
- Data collection
- Analysis of data
- Reporting the findings.

It is important to note that the idea of best practice does not purport to offer definitive or absolute "right" answers, for in this domain as in others, research practice is variable and often contested. Differences in research culture, academic discipline, and practical experience all combine to generate real disagreement about the optimal conduct of research. But this does not mean no guidance can be given. The members of the EU Kids Online network want to put forward this guide in the collaborative spirit of passing on to others their understanding of the literature, best research in and, at times, lessons learned from mistakes.

Each answer to a Frequently Asked Question is structured in a similar way:

- What's the issue?
- Common practice
- Questions to consider
- Pitfalls to avoid
- Examples of studies and researchers' experiences
- References and further resources

The Frequently Asked Questions are also available online at www.eukidsonline.net, together with further resources and research materials (survey questionnaires, interview schedules, etc.) that exemplify useful qualitative and quantitative research practices. Most but not all resources are in English, the aim being to aid researchers across Europe.

EU Kids Online's Methodological Issues Review, freely available from the website, contains up-to-date critical discussion of key methodological issues and a substantial bibliography, and can be a useful supplement and further reading to this guide.