



RRITA Quick Start Guide

A practical entry point for new users

What you need before you begin

- A qualitative research question rooted in an interpretivist paradigm
- The RRITA matrix template (one copy per participant)
- Familiarity with your topic sufficient to identify 3–5 research domains

The research question

A well-formed RRITA research question specifies five elements:

1. The **phenomenon** under investigation
2. The **population** of interest
3. The **methodology** (RRITA)
4. The **contextual boundaries** of the study
5. The **paradigm** within which the study is situated

Example: This research, situated within a social constructivist paradigm, seeks to make sense of how palliative care patients and relatives in French-speaking Switzerland understand gratitude, using RRITA for integrated data generation and analysis.

Setting up your matrix

Open the RRITA matrix template. Before doing anything else:

- Enter your research question at the top
- Define your research domains and enter them in the first column
- Complete your first **reflexive anchor entry** (Step 1) — document your initial positionality at study level: your disciplinary background, assumptions, values, and what you hope or fear to find
- Develop your interview guide by associating 2–3 questions with each domain

The matrix is now ready for data generation.

The seven steps at a glance

Step	Action	Output
1. Establishing the analytic foundation	Formulate paradigm-aligned research question; identify research domains; set up RRITA matrix; complete first reflexive anchor entry at study level	Initialised matrix
2. Preparing data generation tools	Develop interview guide aligned with research domains; address ethical and governance requirements; complete reflexive anchor entry at study level	Interview guide
3. Generating raw data <i>(expansion)</i>	Complete participant-specific reflexive anchor entry before interview; conduct and audio-record interview; populate verbatim extracts, observations, notes on data, and reflexive notes	Expanded matrix
4. Refining raw data <i>(compression)</i>	Update reflexive anchor; review Expanded matrix; remove irrelevant and repetitive material; retain core narrative and interpretive context; flag ambiguous passages with notes on data	Compressed matrix
5. Coding <i>(expansion)</i>	Update reflexive anchor; code verbatim extracts and relevant observations line-by-line; write memos for interpretive codes; document analytic tensions and discordance as they arise	Coded matrix
6. Developing themes <i>(compression)</i>	Update reflexive anchor; compile Master list of codes; duplicate into Working list; group codes into provisional thematic groups; assign theme names, definitions, and warrants; develop reflexive pivots at extract and theme level	Themed matrix
7. Constructing the analytic narrative	Integrate reflexive pivots from previous steps into five iterative narrative movements: thematic articulation, illustration, interpretation, reflexive pivot, integration with literature	Published findings

Before your first interview

- Pilot the guide with one or two participants
- Complete the reflexive anchor for Step 2 — document your positionality ahead of data collection
- If your participants have clinical conditions (breathlessness, pain, fatigue), plan for shorter sessions and built-in pauses
- Prepare neutral probing phrases: “*Could you tell me more about that?*”, “*What did that mean for you?*”, “*How did your thinking evolve from there?*”

The five qualities of a good interview question

Quality	What it means	Watch out for
Clarity	Uses participants’ vocabulary	Academic or clinical jargon
Natural phrasing	Sounds conversational	Stilted or over-formal wording
Neutrality	Avoids leading or evaluative framing	Embedded assumptions (“How did that affect you?”)
Descriptive focus	Asks participants to narrate, not theorise	“What do you think about...” questions
Participant-centredness	Creates space for participant meanings	Imposing your analytic categories

The reflexive anchor: what to write and when

The reflexive anchor runs across all seven steps. At each step, before beginning the analytic work of that step, document:

- Your current assumptions, values, and emotional resonances relevant to this participant or this stage
- Any positionality shifts since the previous entry
- Methodological decisions and their rationale

Steps 1–2: Study-level entries — your relationship to the topic, paradigm, and method before data collection begins.

Steps 3–6: Participant-specific entries — your positionality in relation to this participant’s data at this analytic stage.

There is no minimum length. The anchor is a thinking tool, not a confession. A sentence can be sufficient; what matters is honesty and analytic consequence.

Analytic tensions and discordance: what to record

Throughout Steps 5 and 6, document in the dedicated matrix column:

- **Analytic tensions** — frictions between your subjectivity and the data, among emerging insights, or between the data and existing literature
- **Discordance** — internal contradictions or negative cases within the raw data
- **Reflexive pivots** — moments where engaging with a tension or discordance concretely redirects or deepens your interpretation

Do not wait until themes are stable to record these. Capture them as they arise — they are the interpretive friction that prevents premature closure.

How to know when your themes are ready

A theme is ready when it:

- Offers a specific interpretive insight into the research question — not a description or a topic label
- Reflects a patterned meaning across multiple participants and codes
- Has clear conceptual boundaries — it is distinct from other themes
- Is justified by a theme warrant that makes your interpretive reasoning explicit
- Is grounded in raw data — you can trace it back to verbatim extracts through the matrix

If a theme cannot be warranted, it is not yet a theme. Return to the codes and ask what they are actually saying.

A note on versioning

Never overwrite a matrix tab. Save each version — Expanded, Compressed, Coded, Themed — as a separate tab within the same file. The versioned trail is not an administrative formality: it is the auditable record of your analytic journey and the foundation of your study's dependability and confirmability.

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Based on: Poncin, E. (forthcoming). Qualitative inquiry in nursing and health research: Introducing RRITA, a rapid, reflexive, integrated approach to thematic analysis.