

The Reid Technique - A Model for Proper Interviewing and Interrogation Procedures

At the American Psychology-Law Society conference in Los Angeles in March 2024, there were several references to the idea that investigators must move past “psychologically manipulative tactics” and adopt a science-based methodology to assess subject credibility. In discussions and publications psychologically manipulative tactics are described as isolating the subject from others; exaggerating the legal consequences of the subject’s behavior; making promises of leniency in return for a confession; creating false evidence; and conducting questioning for an exhaustively lengthy period of time. There were references by some that these were characteristics of the Reid Technique. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

The science-based methodology that was recommended for the structure of the investigative interview included the development of cooperation via rapport and trust; the elicitation of information using productive questioning to enhance a subject’s recollection; the use of strategic questioning and assessment of verbal or story-based cues to evaluate credibility; and, the strategic withholding of evidence as a way to identify statement-evidence inconsistencies and resolve a subject’s responses to discrepancies.” **This is exactly what the Reid Technique interview process is.**

The Essential Elements of the Reid Investigative Interview

The Reid investigative interview process is called the Behavior Analysis Interview or BAI.

- The Reid interview process is a non-accusatory, non-confrontational information-gathering conversation.
- Throughout the interview process, the investigator should maintain a neutral, objective, non-judgmental fact-finder approach.
- No accusations of guilt should be made during the interview process.
- All interviews should be conducted in accordance with the guidelines established by the courts, such as the appropriate advisement of rights, the presence of a parent or guardian for a juvenile; etc.

- The interview should begin with casual conversation, biographical information, employment information, etc. to acclimate the subject to the interview process, develop the subject's behavioral baseline, and develop rapport.
- The investigator should use open-ended questions to develop the subject's statement, story, version of events, or explanation of what happened.
- After the subject relates their initial story or version of events the investigator should then ask a series of questions to develop additional details, as well as questions to clarify the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the incident that is under investigation.
- During the interview, the investigator should attempt to resolve any inconsistencies or contradictions that may have surfaced from the interviews of other subjects or from the investigative information.
- If the subject offers an alibi for the period in question, every effort should be made to substantiate the alibi.
- We encourage investigators to follow the 80/20 rule – during the interview the subject should do 80% of the talking and the investigator should do 20%.
- The investigator should observe the subject's verbal and non-verbal behaviors as a guide for the interview questions. It is important to remember that no behavior is unique to deception – behavior must be evaluated in context and against the subject's normal behaviors. Numerous factors can affect a subject's behavior during the interview, including culture, mental and psychological impairments, physical condition, drugs and alcohol, etc. which the investigator must consider.
- A subject's verbal and nonverbal behaviors are not a substitute for evidence but can help identify when a subject may be less than candid during the interview, prompting additional questions which may in turn lead to the discovery of additional incriminating facts or evidence.
- The investigator should not tell the subject what they know about the case but rather evaluate whether or not the subject's statement is consistent with what is known or on the other hand, if the case facts and evidence contradict what the subject has stated.

- In addition to the investigative questions, the investigator should utilize behavior-provoking questions** during the interview.
- The investigator should not reveal all of the details about the crime (it is critical to withhold crime details that can later be used to confirm the authenticity of the subject's acknowledgment of what he did).
- The investigator should not show the suspect crime scene photographs that reveal corroborating details.
- The investigator should evaluate the subject's possible involvement in the issue under investigation based on the investigation, case facts, factual evidence, and information developed during the interview.
- The interview (and any subsequent interrogation) should be recorded.

The Investigative Questions are the core of the interview process.

As an example, John was found dead in his home on Saturday night. He had been shot in the head. John was a real estate agent and worked out of his home office. He had several real estate colleagues who occasionally also worked out of his home office. As part of the investigation, John's colleagues were interviewed, one of whom was Dennis. When Dennis was asked when was the last time he had been over to John's house he said "It's been quite a while, I would say at least a month, maybe 5 or 6 weeks since I was over there." Unbeknownst to Dennis, when the police canvased the neighborhood, they found a lady who lived across the street from John who that Saturday morning was filming her kids playing soccer in the yard, and in the background, you could see someone approaching John's front door and then going into the house. A close examination of the video revealed that it was Dennis who went into John's house at about 10:00 am Saturday, the day of the murder. The fact that Dennis lied to the investigator about when he had most recently been at John's house was very significant....more so than any behavioral observation.

In our book, *Criminal Interrogation and Confessions* we devote over 100 pages discussing the proper way to conduct an investigative interview.

** Behavior-provoking questions (BPQs) are questions that most truthful individuals answer one way, while deceptive individuals often answer in a completely different manner. Here is an example of two behavior-provoking questions from a child sex abuse investigation:

The THINK question: "John did you ever think about engaging in sexual activities with any of the children here at the daycare facility?"

ANSWER: "I think that everyone working here has thoughts like that."

The PUNISHMENT question: "Jim, what do you think should happen to a staff member who has engaged in sexual activities with any of the children?"

ANSWER: "Well, I guess it depends on how often it happened."

The Essential Elements of the Reid Interrogation Process

- Interrogations should only be conducted when the case investigative information indicates the subject's probable involvement in the commission of the crime. The purpose of an interrogation is to learn the truth.
- The investigator should conduct all interrogations following the guidelines established by the courts - advisement of rights; the presence of a parent or guardian for a minor; etc.
- The investigator should not make any promises of leniency, threats of harm or inevitable consequences, or physically abuse the subject.
- The investigator should not conduct interrogations for an excessively lengthy period of time.
- The investigator should not deny the subject any of their rights.
- The investigator should not deny the subject the opportunity to satisfy their physical needs.
- In a non-custodial interrogation, the investigator should not deprive the subject of the opportunity to leave the room
- The investigator should exercise special caution when questioning juveniles or individuals with mental or psychological impairments and should not lie to these subjects about evidence.
- When a suspect claims to have little or no memory of the period when the crime was committed the investigator should not lie to the suspect about incriminating evidence.
- The investigator should never manufacture evidence implicating the subject.
- The central focus of the persuasion process is to propose to the suspect reasons and motives that will serve to psychologically justify or excuse their behavior – not legally justify or excuse their behavior.
- When the subject acknowledges what they did, the investigator should ask open-ended questions to develop corroborating information – the location of the murder weapon or bloody clothes; how the subject gained entry into the building; where the subject sold the stolen jewelry, etc. Corroboration is an essential element to establish the authenticity of the subject's statement.
- The interrogation should be recorded.

- The subject's confession is not the end of the investigation...the investigator should continue to develop additional details about the subject's behavior before and after the commission of the crime and to verify the details of his statement of involvement.

All investigators should adhere to the following principles:

- Always treat the subject with dignity and respect
- Always conduct interviews and interrogations according to the guidelines established by the courts
- Do not make any promises of leniency
- Do not engage in any physical abuse of the suspect
- Do not make any threats of harm or inevitable consequences
- Do not conduct interrogations for an excessively lengthy period
- Do not deny the subject any of their rights
- Do not deny the subject the opportunity to satisfy their physical needs
- Exercise special cautions when questioning socially immature juveniles or individuals with mental or psychological impairments

Reid Policy Recommendations regarding Misrepresenting Evidence During an Interrogation

- Investigators should consider the impact that misrepresenting evidence to the subject may have on a jury's or court's perception of their credibility.
- Investigators should be sure to check with their local prosecutors as to their views and recommendations regarding misrepresenting evidence to a subject and should be familiar with court decisions in their jurisdiction on this issue.
- Investigators should not misrepresent any evidence to a suspect who acknowledges that he may have committed the crime even though he has no specific recollections of doing so.
- Investigators should not misrepresent any evidence when interrogating a youthful suspect with low social maturity or a suspect with diminished mental capacity or psychological disabilities. *
- Investigators should not use deception to threaten inevitable consequences.
- Investigators should never fabricate evidence or lie about potential leniency.

- Given current judicial and legislative trends regarding the use of deception during an interrogation, investigators should adopt a general practice of avoiding misrepresentations concerning incontrovertible or dispositive evidence.

*Several states have enacted legislation that prohibits investigators from lying to juveniles about evidence – see our complete statement regarding the use of deception during an interrogation [Reid Policy on the Use of Deception During an Interrogation](#)

The following references are a combination of video presentations from our YouTube channel, *The Reid Technique Tips*, and documents on our website, www.reid.com.

Videos

- [False Confessions – The Issues to be Considered: Parts One and Two](#)
- [What Questions Should be Asked to Determine the Voluntariness and Validity of a Subject's Confession?](#)
- [Using Open-ended questions – Parts One and Two](#)
- [There is No Behavior Unique to Lying](#)
- [Do Not Tell the Subject What You Know](#)
- [The Value of Behavior-Provoking Questions – A Case Study](#)
- [The Value of Recording Interrogations](#)
- [Positive Persuasion](#)
- [Projection and Rationalization](#)

Documents

- [False Confessions - The Issues to be Considered](#)
- [What Questions Should be Asked to Determine the Voluntariness and Validity of a Subject's Confession?](#)
- [Clarifying Misrepresentations About Interrogation Techniques](#)