AEIOU

Contextual inquiry. Note-taking method.

Activities, **Environments**, **Interactions**, **Objects** and **Users**

AEIOU is just one of several frameworks for making ethnographic notes, but it's the one I find most useful for user experience observations.

Activities

Goal directed sets of actions — things that people want to accomplish.

- What primary activities do users need to perform to meet their goals?
- What do users mention first?
- Which action words (verbs) do they use?

Environments

Include the entire arena where activities take place.

- Take photographs or make a sketch of the environment where the action happens.

Interactions

The exchanges between a person and someone or something else.

- What are the intermediate steps or tasks in the process?
- What steps does the user enjoy most?
- What are the user's pet peeves?
- Who else collaborates in the activity?

Objects

The artefacts that people interact with.

- What physical items does the participant interact with?
- What software does the participant use?

Users

The people providing the behaviours, preferences and needs.

- What are the participant's goals, attitudes and motivations?
- What are the participant's capabilities with the domain and with technology?
- What education and training do participants have?