1. Who is the primary user of your product? Be as specific as possible.

2. What existing problem or need is the user currently experiencing?

3. How might your product solve the problem or fulfill the need of the user?

4. Do you think the user consciously recognizes that the problem even exists? Why or why not?

5. Based on your knowledge, does the user currently use any existing products or workarounds to deal with the problem/need?

6. Brainstorm all of the possible locations where your users might be located.
   - Don’t limit yourself to locations where the user actually uses a particular product or engages in a specific target activity. For example, users who enjoy hiking certainly visit trails and parks, but they can also be found in many other places, such as outdoor gear stores.
   - Consider where certain users gather in large numbers, such as conferences, festivals, events, stores, organizations (e.g. hospitals), as well as virtual spaces (e.g. forums).

7. Generate a list of questions to ask the user in order to learn more about their experience. Write down as many questions as you can.
Strategies for Interviewing Strangers

1. Capture attention and interest
   • Introduce yourself
   • Communicate credibility and transparency of purpose before asking questions
     o We are MIT students
     o We want to learn
     o We need your help
   • Why should this person take the time to respond?
     o Share what you hope to gain from the interview
     o Describe exactly what you plan to do with the information they provide
     o Offer an incentive (e.g. opportunity to help shape a new product)
   • How much time will this take?

2. Prepare targeted questions
   • Focus on the user’s experiences and opinions
     o Resist the temptation to offer solutions or hypothetical fixes (e.g. “What if…”)
     o Remain focused on the user and their problem or need
   • Use accessible lay-friendly language
     “How would you characterize your camping stove’s ignition process?”
     vs.
     “How do you light your camping stove?”
   • Be mindful of leading questions
     “Would you use your camping stove more if it was lightweight?”
     vs.
     “What, if anything, would you change about your camping stove?”
   • Prioritize your questions, as you will likely not be able to ask them all
   • Record the interview (audio or video), though ask the interviewee for permission

3. Plan to improvise
   • Be curious
   • Ask “why?” after abrupt answers
   • Ask follow-up questions
   • Don’t be afraid to go off script
   • Enjoy the conversation

4. Be gracious and kind
   • Time is precious, they’ve given you a gift
   • Reiterate the impact of their participation
   • You can invite them to the final presentation (and send them the invitation link)
   • Close the loop regarding the product
     o Interviewee may wonder, “When can I buy X?”
     o Let them know whether or not the product idea moves forward to the final prototype

5. Have FUN
   • Interviewing strangers is an adventure of discovery!