

# Themes Sheets: Lean affinity mapping for on-the-go research analysis

**Time:** 5-10 minutes after each research activity

**Project Phase:** User research

**Who's Involved?** Research investigators

## Goal

The goal of this activity is to distil insights from user research during the research phase to provide a foundation for research analysis.

## Instructions

Create a Themes Sheet by creating a spreadsheet with a header row titled "Source" and a merged header column titled "Themes" (see template below). You can use Google Sheets, Excel, or pretty much any software that allows you to create tables — but we recommend Sheets or Excel since you may wind up with a very wide and long table depending on the extent of your research.

After each research activity, investigators should each jot down their top three takeaways from the session. They should then share these with one another and discuss other themes examined in the interview.

Next, open up your Themes Sheet. Create a new row and fill it with a brief description of your research session. Next, run through the themes previously inputted into the sheet to see whether any of your takeaways or other discussed themes align with what's already there. If they align, place an X in that column to indicate an affinity. If they align but the session elaborated on the theme, add a description of that elaboration in that column.

Add new themes to the next available column, including themes that oppose previous themes.

Ahead of conducting research analysis, return to your Themes Sheet to refresh your memory from the sessions. When engaging in research analysis, you can use the Themes Sheet as a tool to validate affinity diagramming and spark conversation.

## Template: Themes Sheets

Source	Themes		
Rows show research sources.	Columns show themes.		
	"X"s show affinities.	New columns show new themes which may not appear in previous columns.	
	Text shows elaborations of affinities.		

## Example

Source	Themes		
Sally, Usability Test (14/11/16)	Preference for search bar over categories	Cannot distinguish items in top nav	
Michael, User Interview (16/11/16)	X	Difference between "news" and "blog" unclear	Language is tailored towards later-stage entrepreneurs
Aditi, User Interview (18/11/16)		X	X