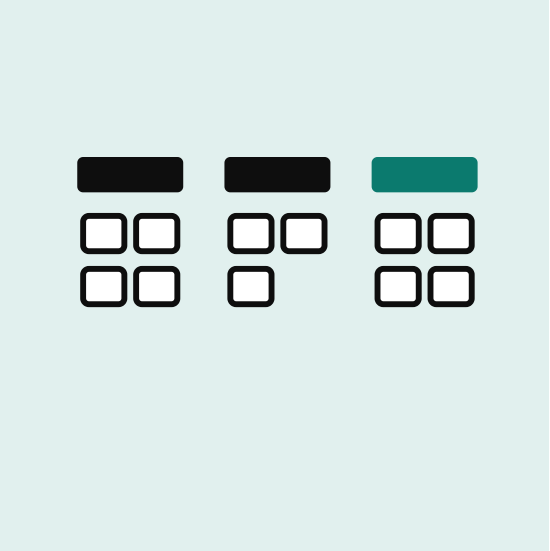
Method

Affinity diagram

Writing each research observation on a note and grouping the notes by affinity, bottom-up, until the themes that connect them emerge.



In Spanish

Diagrama de afinidad

Origin

The KJ method of anthropologist Jiro Kawakita (1967); in design, Beyer and Holtzblatt (1998)

Output

Observations grouped into themes

What it's for

It helps you organize lots of scattered, varied data without imposing categories on it in advance.

Key elements

One idea per note

Short, concrete and true to what was observed.

Bottom-up

Groups come from the data, not from a prior list.

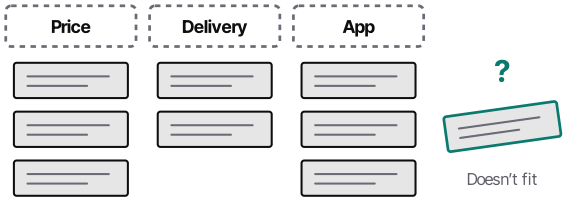
Name each group

With a sentence that says what they have in common.

An example

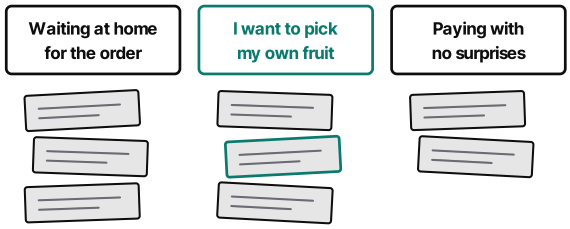
A team interviewed people who do their grocery shopping online and has dozens of notes.

With prior categories



The notes are sorted into columns decided in advance: Price, Delivery, App. Whatever doesn't fit is left out. **It confirms what was already believed.**

Bottom-up



Grouping the notes that are alike reveals a theme that was on no list: people want to pick their own fruit. **A theme nobody expected.**

Grouping from the data reveals themes that categories decided in advance would have hidden.

How it's done

1

Write one observation on each note.

2

Group the notes that are alike, without prior categories.

3

Give a title to each group and arrange the groups.

Applications in design

When to use it

Right after fieldwork, as a team and with the notes in view.

Avoid

Starting with categories already decided: that way you only confirm what you believed.

Don't fall for it

Keep track of where each note comes from so you can go back to the source.

Connections

Builds on

- Insight
- Design synthesis

Used by

- Design research

Related to

- Brainwriting (6-3-5 method)
- Contextual Design
- In-depth interview
- Brainstorming
- Empathy map
- Mind map

Authors and works

1967	**Jiro Kawakita**	Created it to organize fieldwork data that was very different from one item to the next.
1998	**Hugh Beyer and Karen Holtzblatt**	Made it part of their design process to synthesize what was learned during visits.

Sources

Original sources

- Kawakita, J. (1967). Hassōhō [Método para generar ideas]. Chūōkōronsha.
- Beyer, H., & Holtzblatt, K. (1998). Contextual design: Defining customer-centered systems. Morgan Kaufmann.

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026

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