Thematic analysis: When data is analysed by theme, it is called thematic analysis. This type of analysis is highly inductive, that is, the themes emerge from the data and are not imposed upon it by the researcher. In this type of analysis, the data collection and analysis take place simultaneously. Even background reading can form part of the analysis process, especially if it can help to explain an emerging theme. Closely connected to thematic analysis is comparative analysis. Using this method, data from different people is compared and contrasted and the process continues until the researcher is satisfied that no new issues are arising. Comparative and thematic analyses are often used in the same project, with the researcher moving backwards and forwards between transcripts, memos, notes and the research literature.

Content analysis: For those types of analyses at the other end of the qualitative data continuum, the process is much more mechanical with the analysis being left until the data has been collected. Perhaps the most common method of doing this is to code by content. This is called content analysis. Using this method the researcher systematically works through each transcript assigning codes, which may be numbers or words, to specific characteristics within the text. The researcher may already have a list of categories or she may read through each transcript and let the categories emerge from the data. Some researchers may adopt both approaches. This type of analysis can be used for open-ended questions which have been added to questionnaires in large quantitative surveys, thus enabling the researcher to quantify the answers.