Steps in Eliciting

1. Preparation
   - a crucial component of good fieldwork
   - requires analysis of existing data
   - select several matters as targets for investigation, and be ready to shift to another if a given matter proves unfruitful
   - state your problem and methodology clearly
   - one must also produce ‘periodic progress reports or sketches of various aspects of the grammar’ A rigorous handling of the data reveals how much is already known and what remains to be learned. Also valuable are summary charts, diagrams, lists of problems, etc.). Consider example of Malinowski, whose published account of the kula ring represented his ninth write up of it.
   - Work out forms in the contact language which will elicit the desired ones in the target language.
   - Another technique: enlighten the informant. The informant will cooperate more intelligently and efficiently if s/he understands what it is that the investigator is doing.
   - Be prepared with a good variety of material, far more than could possibly be used in one session.
   - It is good to have a list of concrete, well-understood and simple words, consisting of words from a ‘basic word list’ along with words of high cultural relevance.
   - Seek to proceed step by step, adding as little new information as possible each time.

2. Build-Up
   - Until one can transcribe accurately and quickly, it may be good to work toward the sentence one desires to get. E.g., to get “That man owns three horses,” ask first for “That man” and then “three horses”
   - One should avoid asking the informant to speak slowly, as it may result in unnatural speech. As a result, it’s important to elicit information in chunks that one can handle.

3. Transcription
   - This involves the recording, as linguistic data, of all that the informant says in his/her own language.
   - Typically, transcription is into composition notebooks, typically writing down target item first, then translation of it.
   - Important to look into face of informant when giving stimulus sentence when informant makes response, in order to observe the physical features that accompany speech, such as lip position, jaw aperture, etc.
   - Important to write down the meaning or use of sentence, not just one’s elicitation translation. In fact, a very good idea to ask the informant to translate what has just been provided, and to put that in,
by asking “And how would you translate that?” This is called BACK TRANSLATION
• Should include investigator’s inferences, and volunteered information from informant, and distinguish these types of info.
• Also, investigators need to include all info that they use in elicitation, e.g. say you have a scheduled elicitation item, and proceed with this question: “how do you say, ‘she was in the house’?” but then add, “that is, just a few minutes ago” in seeking to get immediate past. It is important to add a note in your notes about using the expression ‘a few minutes ago’ in eliciting this datum.
• Important to realize that what you are getting may be “ingenious descriptive phrases” rather than “distinct names”. E.g., ‘s/he may think s/he is getting the distinctive name of a certain basket, but what s/he records is nothing more than ‘little basket’; s/he may want to know the generic term and the informant give the specific name. But these are misunderstandings that can be cleared up quickly with on-the-spot analysis and further elicitation (by asking for contrasting terms, for instance).’

Examples: elicited forehead, given our forehead; elicited dog, given I am petting
• Variant pronunciations, utterances must each be recorded. Be careful to note any apparent differences of register (more casual, more formal), and don’t insist that people repeat things that they believe to be errors.
• When informant says “We can’t say that.” note it down, because negative statements may yield interesting grammatical information as well.

4. Repetition
• Repetitions are important, but they represent unnatural speech.
• Try to collect items in same context when getting repetitions, because words in isolation may have different prosodic, metrical features than they do in a particular context
• In seeking to get repetitions of items from preceding days, one should give both translation and item. But if informant gives a different form, one should not be surprised, as there is much variability in language.