

Tips for Writing a Survey

1. Make the survey simple.

- Write a short questionnaire.
- Use simple words.
 - Less than 25 words per question
- Relax your grammar.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Divide the survey into sections to avoid fatigue.
- State the length before the survey.
 - Prepared (warn) the respondent of the survey length.

2. Write it for the type of survey used.

- Mail: low cost, large sample, simple questions, short survey, honest answers, education required
- Telephone: short turn-around, large sample, longer/ more complex survey, high response rate, telephone required
- Face-to-Face: labor intensive, small sample, very long/ complex survey, control over questions, high response rate, less respondent bias
- Web-based: low cost, large sample, simple questions, short survey, honest answers, computer skills needed

3. Ask the right kind of questions.

- Use Closed-ended questions rather than Open-ended ones
 - “Which of the following...” not “What do you think...”
- Keep the list of choices short.
- Avoid use of leading questions.
 - “Because cancer is the most pressing problem in the county...”
- Keep away from difficult concepts.

4. Align your questions appropriately.

- Put your questions in a logical order.
- Put similar-type questions together.
- Make sure scales are aligned and appropriate.
 - “Rank 1-5, with 5 being the greatest”

5. Do not bore the participants.

- Start with interesting questions.
- Put the easy questions at the end.
 - Demographics of respondent
 - “Yes/no” questions

6. Test the survey before distribution.

- Find someone who was not involved in the project
- Gauge:
 - Time
 - Effort
 - Clarity

7. Provide clear instructions.

- Assure a common understanding.
- Cover memo or introduction
 - Components
 - Length
 - Purpose
 - What to do when finished
 - Confidentiality
 - Others?

8. Think through collection before distribution.

- Develop coding scheme or database to expedite data entry.
- Create process by which completed surveys will be collected and entered.
- Keep in mind your resource/ time constraints.

9. Develop appropriate process to distribute the survey.

- Name the survey to gain attention.
- Have clear directions for those distributing the survey.
- Provide a FAQ sheet about the research project.
- Assure your distribution method was effective.