

Questions About Survey Questions

1. Have I included all essential questions?
2. Is it possible to eliminate any questions?
3. Is it possible to shorten any questions? Since long questions tend to be more confusing, use simpler words and shorter prompts when feasible.
4. Are the questions clear—is every respondent likely to interpret the questions in the same way or do you need to define a key term or specialized vocabulary?
5. Have you avoided gender bias in the items?
6. Do scaled questions have an equal number of positive and negative response categories?
7. Are the questions leading or is there a socially desirable response? Use phrasing such as “Some people favor X, but other people are opposed to X. What is your opinion?”
8. Have you avoided using “loaded” words, jargon or unfamiliar terminology?
9. Have you avoided yes/no questions unless you want a yes/no answer?
10. Are all potential respondents likely to have a place to respond to each question? If you are not able to include all possible categories, include “Other” and ask respondents to “specify” or “explain”. Some questions may also require a “Not Applicable” option if there is a possibility that it may not apply to all respondents, or “Don’t Know” if it is possible that they may not have the knowledge required to respond.
11. Does each question have a single focus? Ask one question at a time, avoiding “double-barreled” questions, because respondents may want to reply differently to each part.
12. Have you avoided using negatives in the question that require the respondents to say “yes” when they mean “no”?
13. Have you avoided asking respondents to make calculations, e.g., percentages?
14. Are the response categories clear and mutually exclusive?
15. Do the response categories correspond to the dimension in the item?
16. Have you placed response spaces consistently to the right or left of the response options?

17. Do the respondents know what you expect them to do to answer each question, e.g., to tick/cross, underline, circle or write their own answer?
18. Do the questions flow logically/have a logical sequence? Start by asking your more straightforward, less sensitive questions that arouse interest and then move to those requiring longer answers or address more sensitive topics.
19. What kind of questions would you, as a respondent, be willing and able to answer? If your research questions require respondents to explore sensitive issues or disclose confidential information, are the questions worded in such a way that they will be willing to answer them?
20. How much “burden” does the question place on the respondent? How long will the question and response options take them to read and consider? If the question is open-ended, how much do you expect them to write?
21. If items require respondents to recall the past, is the question specific and limited to a relatively recent timeframe? Unless they are asked to recall major events, the time should not extend beyond six months.
22. What is the visual impression of the questions on the page (paper or electronic)? Is there sufficient white space?
23. Have you minimized the use of matrices?
24. Have you avoided multiple fonts, colors and animation that may be difficult to read— unless these are essential to the question being asked?
25. If you have an option, have you used radio buttons rather than drop-down choices?
26. Does the layout help insure that the response options are clear and no questions will be overlooked? Design for simplicity, consistency, and ease of navigation through the survey.
27. Do the skip patterns, filters, or branching, if any, work as anticipated?