



General Considerations for Writing Survey Questions

Concentrate on precision

- Make the questions and response alternatives as unambiguous as possible.

Good question writing is good technical writing

- A good survey has the same qualities as a good repair manual—clear, unadorned and to the point.

Write for your audience

- Do your questions include jargon, buzz words, uncommon words, and words with a double meaning? Consider whether your survey respondents will understand them correctly.

Avoid redundancy

- Ask about one thing at time, and avoid “double-barreled” questions (e.g., Do you like *and* respect your teacher?).

Create clear response categories

- Make sure your response categories are exhaustive, and that the definitions of the categories are clear to respondents. Use an “other” category to make sure to capture all possible responses.
- Response categories should be mutually exclusive, and should not overlap. Check boundaries.

Make open-ended items appropriately specific

- Consider whether you want to ask for specific suggestions (e.g., How can our service be improved?) or just give respondents a chance to say whatever they want (What comments do you have?). Both types of questions are acceptable, but the more specific ones will yield more targeted information.