

Survey Preparation and Design Tips

Use these tips to plan and design your survey to collect data for your project.

Data collection planning: Whether collecting data through the creation of an online survey or collecting data from the Internet, plan before gathering:

- Review your project question(s). What are you trying to discover?
- What actions do you want to take as a result of the survey?
- Visualize all the relevant information that you need. What kind of charts, graphs, or other visual representations will you need to prepare?
- Who is your target audience? What is the best way to reach that specific audience?

(Bhaskaran, ND)

Introduction: Create an introduction that explains the purpose of the survey in the context of the project.

Precise, clear, concise: Make sure questions are easy to understand and can be completed in a reasonable amount of time. Participants are likely to submit incomplete surveys if a survey seems too long or complicated. If feasible, conduct a trial run of the survey and get feedback before using your “official” survey.

Logical sequence:

- Check that initial questions do not bias the results of questions that follow.
- Typically, ask broader questions first and more specific questions later.
- Ensure that the order of the possible responses is logical and consistent. For instance, if you ask respondents to select from a scale, make sure the order of the scale is consistent throughout the survey (always from low to high or high to low).

Well-suited questions: Consider the type of question that is best suited to meet your needs. Multiple choice questions are the easiest to graph and compare, but you may need some open-ended questions to allow for broader, more qualitative feedback and data.

Balanced questions: Avoid questions that lead to certain answers.

Provide options: For questions with multiple-choice options, always include a response such as “Other” or “Does not apply,” so everyone can respond accurately.

Bhaskaran, V. Online Research: A Handbook for Online Data Collection

<http://www.questionpro.com/images/Online-Research-Handbook.pdf>