

SURVEY SUCCESS

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
WILL HELP YOU TO SURVEY
SUCCESSFULLY

QUICK GUIDE FOR SURVEY COMPONENTS

1. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW, NOT WHAT WOULD BE NICE TO KNOW
2. KEEP IT BRIEF
LONG COMPREHENSIVE SURVEYS BORE AND LOOSE RESPONDENTS INTEREST
3. USE EVERYDAY LANGUAGE
BE DIRECT GET TO THE POINT AND CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE'S EDUCATION LEVEL
4. BE AWARE OF ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
WHETHER YOU ARE COLLECTING DATA ANONYMOUSLY OR CONFIDENTIALLY
5. TITLE THE SURVEY
THIS WILL LET RESPONDENTS KNOW WHAT THE SURVEY IS ABOUT. INCLUDE A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND EXPLAIN HOW & WHERE RESULTS WILL BE USED
6. PUT THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE SURVEY
RESPONDENTS MAY HURRY THROUGH THE END OF THE SURVEY AND SKIP QUESTIONS
7. START WITH NONTHREATENING SIMPLE QUESTIONS
THE GOAL SHOULD BE TO COLLECT DATA IN A PROPER MANNER AND NOT TO PRESSURE OR INTIMIDATE RESPONDENTS
8. MAKE SURE YOUR QUESTIONS ARE CLEAR
9. INCLUDE SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS
10. CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE MEASUREMENT SCALE
11. MINIMIZE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
12. INCLUDE A THANK YOU MESSAGE AT THE END OF THE SURVEY AND CONTACT THE IRB
13. BE AWARE OF SECURITY AND/OR FERPA ISSUES; IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

To IRB or not to IRB?

THE Institutional Review Board, (IRB) is a federally mandated committee that provides oversight for all research activities with the aim to protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects recruited to participate in research. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (specifically Office for Human Research Protections) regulations have empowered IRBs to approve, monitor, and review biomedical and behavioral research.

THE IRB came into existence due to research abuses that took place earlier in the twentieth century. Two of the most notorious of these abuses were the experiments of Nazi physicians that became a focus of the post-World War II, and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, by the US Public Health Service on black men in rural Alabama. The 1974 National Research Act which established IRBs also created the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subject of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

All research, whether funded or unfunded, involving human subjects are reviewed by the committee members to ensure research is conducted in a manner that does not infringe on the subject's safety, health, welfare or well being and ensures institutional compliance with related Federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations: 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50). Title 45 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Part 46 provides a guideline for the protection of human subjects involved in the research.

Who must apply? Faculty, staff, students who collect data associated with human subjects in any fashion.

What kinds of data collection are covered? All types including data gathered by survey, focus group, interview, direct contact, web survey, class assigned data collection, reanalysis of data gathered for an alternate purpose, etc. For more information, please visit CMC's IRB web page. (http://www.coloradomtn.edu/faculty_staff/institutional_research/institutional_review_board/)

NUMBER ONE RULE

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Use plain language and be brief!

The focus should be on "need to know" not "nice to know."

CHOOSE A COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Anonymous vs. Confidential

Which ever you decide to use, anonymity or confidentiality should never be breached and individual data should NOT be shared with anyone. To do so would be a breach of ethics. For more information please read the ethical conduct of research section of the policies and procedure PDF available on CMC's IRB web page. (http://www.coloradomtn.edu/faculty_staff/institutional_research/institutional_review_board/)

CHECK YOUR SCALE

Make Sure the Measurement Scale You Choose Matches the Question You Crafted

You will confuse participants if your question asks about quality and your scale indicates frequency. Give extra consideration to choosing a scale that fits the wording of your question. Keep in mind what you are trying to glean from the data collected and choose an appropriate scale. To help you, below are some examples:

Yes-No

True-False

Agree-Disagree

Rank Ordering

Multiple Choice

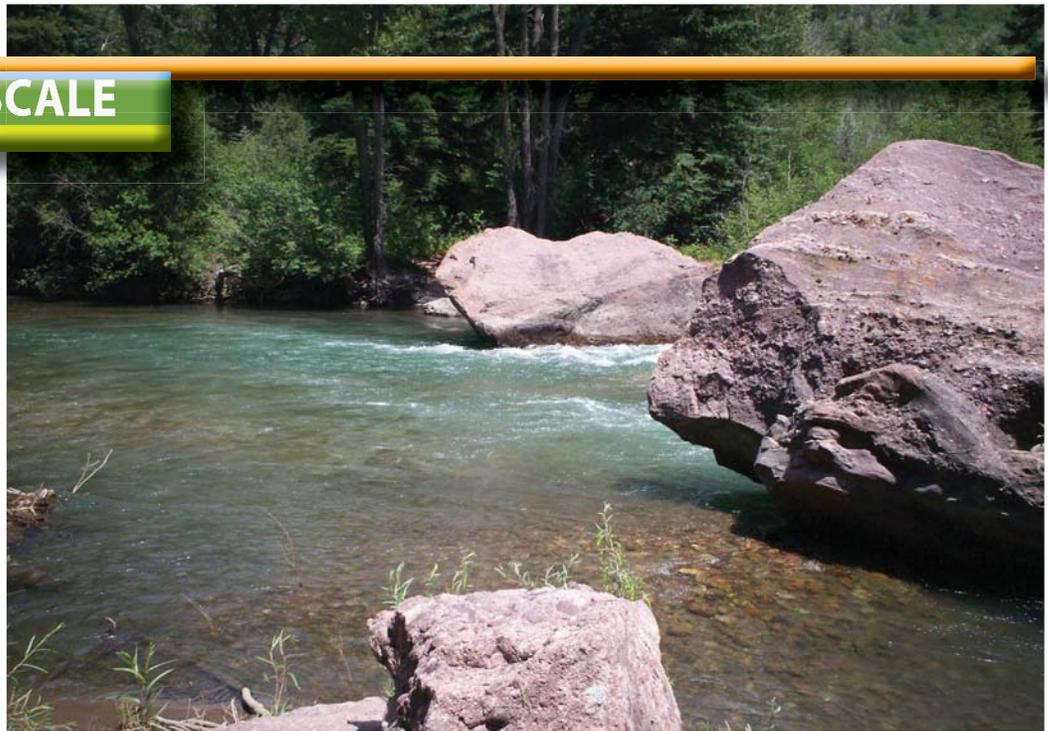
Single Answer

Rating (Likert)

Be clear in what you are asking and select wording that is concrete and not subjective. For example, instead of asking to choose between "in the distant past" and "recently;" ask, "last month" or "this week."

If you use a numbered scale, define the scale and anchor down the low, mid, and high points (e.g. 1=poor, 10=excellent).

Finally, have someone take the survey to test for readability and clarity.



Crafting Questions

How to Ask the Question to Get the Answer You Need.

Surveys can be a relatively quick way to gather data from a specific population which can lead to over use and abuse. Crafting your questions correctly to get the data you need is an art. Time should be taken before hand to determine exactly what you need to know and why you need to know it. You want your questions to be clean and clearly understood.

One of the most common mis-



takes is to create a question or matrix that requires such complex explanation and instruction that respondents will never clearly understand and therefore skip.

Another common mistake is asking "double-barreled" or "loaded" questions. Double-barreled questions confuse respondents, (e.g. Do you like baseball and football?) and loaded questions reveal bias (e.g. Do you agree that this program should end?).

Thought should be given to how you arrange your questions and similar questions should be grouped together. In addition, the most important questions

should be at the beginning of the survey. Open-ended questions should be used sparingly. However, you should ask your respondents for feedback and allow space for "any additional comments." Always explain where and how the results will be used.

Although typos do slip through the editing phase, don't forget to proof read your survey thoroughly.

Finally don't forget to add a thank you message at the end of the survey to thank the participants for their time and attention.

Increasing Response Rates

Today, more surveys are conducted but responses rates are falling. To increase your response rate here are some things to consider:

Paper vs. Web - Numerous studies have compared these two modes and results are mixed. However, the IR dept. can help you create an online survey with a secure link or a scannable paper version.

Multiple contacts - pre-notifications, postcards and reminders are successful techniques.

Length - long surveys bore respondents;

they may fill out only part or may simply reject the survey.

Incentives - a common tool to increase response rates.

Requests for Help - "If people tend to follow a norm of social responsibility, they may be more likely to comply with a survey request couched in terms of asking for help."

Statement of Confidentiality - "Researchers believe this increases response rate and truthfulness.

Before you begin to craft your survey, your purpose and research objectives should be clearly defined.

Porter, Stephen R., "Raising Response Rates: What Works?", *New Directions For Institutional Research*, no. 121, Spring 2004. 5-21.

Diem, Keith G., "A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Effective Questionnaires and Survey Procedures for Program Evaluation and Research." Rutgers Cooperative Research & Extension, FS995. Fact Sheet. February 2002.

"360 Survey Response Scales." Censeo Corporation. 2003.