**Survey construction and question writing.**

Poorly designed and written survey will frustrate your respondents. You do not want to turn them off. So take care to make sure it looks good and is easy to take.

Title

* Provide a descriptive title for the survey

Introduction

* Brief intro as to the purpose of the survey
* An appeal to the respondents to answer the items
* Emphasize that the survey is anonymous
* Thank them

Spacing

* Don’t jam stuff in. Airy feel without being really long.
* Don’t do two columns
* Don’t print on the back of the page
* Group the items by content and provide a subtitle/instructions to each section if it makes sense.
* Hook the reader. Make them want to fill out your survey. Most folks like talking/telling about themselves. Don’t turn them off.

Time element

* Don’t forget this in your question.
* Also, asking respondents to recall behavior over a shorter time is better than a longer time.
* Telescoping. Can minimize it but it’s costly

Always and Never

* Try to avoid ‘always’ and ‘never’
* Best to use “almost always” and “almost never”

Avoid using negatives in statements

* Can cause confusion and jack with your data
* I can’t stop thinking about how the death occurred
  + Very rarely rarely sometimes often very often

Each item should ask only a single question

* No double-barreled questions
  + I dislike the way my friends and family discuss politics
  + I think students and retirees should get a break on insurance
  + Does your job challenge your abilities and require you to perform a variety of tasks?

Response categories should be exhaustive

* Other please specify is your friend!

Avoid biased terms and items

Spell out acronyms and define difficult to understand terms

* Malaise
* Aspirations
* Think about your audience

Underline, italicize or use bold print to draw attention to important things

* Use sparingly though.
* Three consecutive words max

Don’t know is the lazy man’s route. Use sparingly.

In general, avoid putting a blank in the middle of a sentence.

* I spend \_\_\_\_\_ of my free time with my friends.

If the respondent is to choose one option, be sure to say that

* Ensure the options are mutually exclusive

Use ranking items sparingly. Some say only ask for top three as any others are not reliable.

Demographics

* Go at the end of a survey you hand out
* Go first in a face-to-face interview
* Using only those you need
* Write a brief intro to your demographics. “To put your answers in context, we’d like to gather some personal information from you.”

Measuring Attitudes

* Use existing scales if they are available
* Likert type scales are good.
  + No more than seven categories
* Each likert item should deal with one point (no double barreled stuff)
* Used of neutral/undecided option is tricky. I prefer not to use it and instead ask the respondents to mark the item closest to their position.
* Don’t know to be used sparingly. Don’t want them taking easy way out.
* Using multiple items to measure an underlying concept is good.
  + Make some favorable and some unfavorable.
    - Guards against acquiescence bias
  + Label each point in the Likert scale
  + Can use faces too

Skip Patterns/contingency questions

* You may need skip patterns. If so, make them very clear and make them accurate.
* Try not to overdo them so they do not confuse the reader

Matrix questions.

* When the response categories are the same.
* Cluster these questions
* Save space
* Don’t put too many together though or you’ll get ‘response set’ bias.