eGUIDE
WRITING GOOD SURVEY QUESTIONS

UX24/7

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UX24/7: eGuide: Writing Good Survey Questions

We provide the option to write your own survey question/s which will be included in the study. This guide will provide a range of information to help you to write a good survey question.

It is important to note that if you write your own question/s you also need to provide the answer categories, whether that is open ended, yes or no, a single or multi choice selection or a scale. Open ended questions where a respondent can write an answer won't be analysed by us as standard, but the verbatim responses will be handed to you. We can provide analysis but there will be an additional charge.

It is also worth pointing out that the structure of a survey and the order of questions has a significant baring on the outcome. But you don't need to worry because we will take responsibility for how your questions are slotted in to the pre-formatted study. This might mean they are together or separated (if you have written more than one), at the beginning, middle or end but will ensure that you get the valid insight back.

Here are our 13 easy to follow tips on writing survey questions:

1] Keep it relevant

Make sure any question you want to ask is relevant to the audience we are recruiting. For example, if you ask a question about comparison between the experience, they have just had using your website and their experience with competitive websites the respondents won't be able to answer accurately unless they have recently had cause to use competitive websites.

2] Keep it simple

Keep in mind that the person answering the question doesn't have your background knowledge. You have no idea of the level of competence they have so assume the worst and keep it simple. Write in plain English and avoid industry terms and acronyms. If there is a simpler way to say it, use that.

3] Avoid biased questions

Don't use questions that assume the respondent has that position. For example, a biased question might ask: "what did you enjoy about the restaurant?" The respondent may have enjoyed nothing about the restaurant so if you want this type of question insert a "if anything" after the "What" and make sure the answer choices are appropriate (see below).

4] Avoid dual thought questions

Don't use questions that capture two thoughts or arguments. For example a question such as "what did you enjoy or not enjoy about the restaurant"? This question has two thoughts in it and is confusing for respondents. Make sure your question has just one thought contained within it.

5] Avoid multiple thought questions

Don't use questions that contain multiple thoughts and arguments in them. For example "On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being least important and 10 being most important how important is it that restaurants have great food and good ambiance?" Great food is one thought and good ambiance is another. It is impossible to find out which the respondent is referring to when

6] Avoid leading question

Try to avoid influencing the respondent by using leading words in questions. For example if you were to ask: "Rate the quality of dining experience at the world renowned Fat Duck restaurant", the use of the words "world renowned" would influence the results. If removed the question no longer leads the respondent.

7] Avoid creating a dichotomy

If you are ask a question that requires one answer but two are possible you can create a dichotomy and that will be difficult for the respondent to answer. For example, if you were to ask "Do you think Politicians are dishonest or lazy?" It is conceivable that some people will think they are both.

8] Ask direct questions

Try and ask questions that are direct and where it is clear what you are asking. For example; if we ask "How would you improve the Fat Duck restaurant?" we might find out that respondents don't like the name, would prefer if it was in London, or want it to be cheaper. If what we actually want to learn about is the dining experience then make sure that is clear.

9] Ask one question at a time

A little like dual and multiple thought questions, try to avoid asking more than one question at a time. Better two good clear questions than one ambiguous question. For example, if we were to ask "What is the nearest and cheapest restaurant to you?" we are asking two questions and they should be separated.

10] Ask a difficult question

Don't be afraid to ask difficult questions. You can be challenging and edgy but still make the question meet all the guidance above.

11] Provide clear choices

Avoid overlapping response categories. For example; if you ask someone how much they paid for their house and provided answers as follows:

1. 50,000 to 100,000
2. 100,000 to 175,000
3. 175,000 to 200,000
4. And so on…

It would be difficult to answer if my house cost 100,000 or 175,000

12] **Provide balanced scales**

If you are going to provide a scale against which the respondent has to select an answer, make sure it provides an appropriate range of answers. For example, if we want to find out how good the food is at the restaurant we have been talking about and provide the following answers:

1. Good
2. Very Good
3. Excellent
4. Amazing
5. Best food I have ever had

The lowest point a respondent can select is "Good" and the mid-point is "Excellent" and this is therefore not a balanced scale.

13] **Focus on quality not length**

Although we need you to be cognisant that the respondent is online and to some extent time-poor, we would rather you focus on the quality of the question than the length. If is it good enough it is long (or short) enough so think "quality first"!

If you are still unsure about writing your own survey question and need something different added to your study please get in contact with us at:

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