

Survey Questions

Question 1:

Conducting surveys is another way to collect primary data. Surveys are less controlled than experiments, but a well-written survey can provide useful information. The following survey is being distributed to 100 students:

School Feelings Survey

Name: _____ Age: 10-12 12-16 16-17 Over 18

Gender: Male Female

1. Would you like to have the freedom to use your cell phone in class or would you rather be alone with no communication? Cell phones No cell phones

2. Which of the following is your favourite subject? Math English Drama

3. Do you think it's important for students to attend church? Yes No

4. How do you like the new cafeteria menu?
 Pretty good Good Great Fantastic Awesome

5. How do you like the new school logo and mascot at the school?
 Like them Do not like them

Check to make sure the survey asks appropriate questions.

- a) Is the survey anonymous? Why might anonymity be important?
- b) Are the choices for ages appropriate and clear? If not, how can you fix this section? Why is this important information to collect?
- c) Is #1 a leading question? If so, explain why this is a problem and rewrite the question.
- d) Do any questions provide a limited number of options? If so, rewrite the question.
- e) Does the survey ask any personal questions that people might prefer not to answer?
- f) Is the rating scale in #4 a well-written scale? If not, rewrite it.
- g) Question #5 asks for an opinion about two things in one question. Explain why this is a problem and rewrite the question.

Question 2:

Your Turn

In each case, identify the problem with the question and rewrite it so that it is more appropriate.

- a) What is your favourite game system?
 Xbox PlayStation® Wii™
- b) Running a business is hard. Leadership training will help your business run smoother.
 Agree fully Somewhat agree Agree a little
- c) How important do you think speed and quality of service are?
 Very important Important Modestly important
 Of little importance Unimportant

Question 3:

3. For each of the survey questions, explain how the question could be improved. Then, rewrite it.

- a) Do you exercise daily and get enough sleep at night? Yes No
- b) The *Star Wars* saga is one of the best science fiction stories of all time. How do you feel about Disney taking over the franchise?
 Strongly agree Agree Don't know
 Disagree Strongly disagree
- c) Which is your favourite type of music?
 Rap Electronic Pop
- d) How do you feel about the following statement:
We should not reduce the number of recycling days in the school.
 Strongly agree Agree Don't know
 Disagree Strongly disagree

Solutions

Question 1

Solution

- a) No, the survey asks for a name. People may be less likely to answer truthfully, especially if the questions are personal or embarrassing.
- b) No. There are several issues with the age range boxes:
- The ranges overlap: 12 and 16 are both covered in two boxes.
 - The ranges vary: the 12–16 age group is larger than the others.
 - There is no box for an 18-year-old to check.

Use individual ages:

12 and under 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 and over

Demographic information can reveal trends within the population.

- c) The cell phone question suggests that having a cell phone is better than not having one. This is a **biased** question. Phrase questions in a way that is neutral and does not reveal your personal opinion. When asking for an opinion, include a “No Opinion” option.

Should cell phones be allowed in class? Yes No No opinion

- d) The question about a favourite subject includes only three options. Instead, allow respondents to fill in the blanks.

What is your favourite subject? _____

Open questions can sometimes result in unexpected answers. For example, if a respondent says Shakespeare is his favourite subject, you might choose to categorize that as English.

- e) The question about going to a church is unethical. By asking only about church, the question is excluding a potentially large number of people who attend a different place of worship. It is also unrelated to the topic of School Feelings. Consider whether you really need the question in the survey. If you do, rephrase the question and include a third option:

Do you think it is important for students to attend a place of worship?

Yes No Prefer not to answer

- f) The scale gives only positive choices. Also, the choices are vague. Use clear wording and put the worst option at one end of the scale and the best option at the other end. Place the other choices evenly between.

How do you like the new cafeteria menu?

Dislike Do not like or dislike Like

- g) A person who likes either the mascot or the logo, but not both, has nowhere to answer. Either ask two separate questions, or give options that cover all the situations.

How do you like the new school logo and mascot at the school?

I like both I like the logo but not the mascot

I like the mascot but not the logo I dislike both

Question 2

Example 2 Your Turn

- a) Answers may vary. There are **only** three options.
What is your favourite game system?
- b) It is biased. It suggests that leadership training is necessary to run a business.
Do you think that leadership training would help you run a business?
 Yes No No opinion
- c) Asks for an opinion about two things.
How important do you think speed of service is?
 Very Important Important Somewhat Important
 Of Little Importance Not important
- How important do you think quality of service is?
 Very Important Important Modestly Important
 Of Little Importance Not Important

Question 3

3. a) Ask two separate questions.
Do you exercise daily? Yes No
Do you get enough sleep at night? Yes No
- b) Rephrase to make it neutral.
Do you think that the Star Wars saga is one of the best science fiction stories of all time?
 Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree
 Strongly disagree
- c) Make it an open question.
What is your favourite type of music?
- d) Make more concise.
How do you feel about the following statement: We should increase the number of recycling days in the school.
 Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree
 Strongly disagree