

CREATING QUESTIONS

Surveys are a very common data-collection device and can be conducted in a variety of ways: face-to-face interviews, focus groups, mail-in or telephone questionnaires, and even via the Internet. In all cases, however, surveys comprise a series of carefully selected questions.

Information you collect firsthand is called **primary data**. This type of data is easy to work with because you control how it is collected. Information obtained from similar studies conducted by other researchers is called **secondary data**. The results obtained from other surveys can be used in your study, or you can adapt the research questions to create your own survey.

SURVEY QUESTION STYLES

Open Questions

Questions that will be answered in the respondent's own words are open questions. This type of question allows for a wide variety of possibilities that sometimes are difficult to interpret. For example:

- How do you think most Canadians feel about the salaries paid to professional athletes?
- What is the most important issue for teenagers in your community?

Closed Questions

Questions that require the respondent to select from a given list of responses, or has an exact response, are closed. These answers are then easily analyzed; however, the options presented may bias the results. For example:

- Which of these statements describes how salaries for pro athletes compare to average Canadian wages?
 - much lower
 - about the same
 - much higher
 - somewhat lower
 - somewhat higher
- Which of these issues is most important for teenagers in your community?
 - homelessness
 - poverty
 - crime
 - youth gangs
 - drug use

SURVEY QUESTION TYPES***Information Questions***

Circle the appropriate response.

- (a) Gender: M F
(b) Age: under 14 15 or 16
 17 or 18 19 and over

Checklist Questions

Which of the following sports do you enjoy watching? (Check as many as apply.)

- basketball baseball
 cricket hockey
 lacrosse soccer

Ranking Questions

Here is a list of concerns for teenagers. Please rank them in order of importance from 1 (most important) to 4 (least important).

- ___ graduating high school ___ finding a friend
___ getting a summer job ___ learning to drive
___ choosing a career

Rating Questions

How satisfied were you with the DJ for the Valentine's Day dance?

- very satisfied satisfied
 dissatisfied very dissatisfied

Remember:

Good questions are

- simple
- relevant
- specific
- readable

Good questions avoid

- jargon (e.g., Are ribbies the most important statistic for determining batting success?
Comment: ribbies baseball jargon for “runs batted in”)
- abbreviations (e.g., On a scale of 1 to 5, how effective is the CSA in promoting space exploration to school children? CSA Canadian Space Agency)
- negatives (e.g., From the list below, indicate which books you wouldn't recommend parents/guardians read to their toddlers.)
- leading respondents (e.g., Using the three-point scale, indicate your satisfaction with White-O, the most popular toothpaste in Canada.)
- insensitivity (insensitive questions belittle or insult individuals or groups)

Practice: # 1-5, 8, 9, 12, 16