CAGE Questionnaire Overview

Questions:

Have you ever felt you needed to Cut down on your drinking?

Have people been Annoyed by criticizing your drinking?

Have you ever felt Guilty about your drinking?

Have you ever felt you needed an Eye-opener drink in the morning?

A "yes" to two or more indicates possible alcohol misuse

Format & Design Critique

Strengths

Brevity & Focus: With only four direct questions, it's quick to administer—ideal for clinical settings .

Clarity: Uses simple, everyday language, making it easy to understand across varying literacy levels .

Limitations & Biases

Issue	Description	Reference
Content coverage too narrow	CAGE focuses on emotional and behavioral cues but misses out on frequency of	Guidance on questionnaire completeness suggests ensuring questions address all

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	use, context, or binge episodes.	information needed (Wikipedia, Wikipedia, ies.ed.gov)
Response bias potential	Social desirability may influence honest disclosure, as admitting guilt or morning drinks is stigmatized	
Dichotomous response limit	Yes/no answers restrict nuance—no scale to indicate how often or how strongly. Ordinal scales are preferred for richer data	
Lack of context/timeframe	Doesn't specify a time period (e.g., past month), making interpretation inconsistent across respondents	
Cultural interpretation variance	Terms like "annoyed" or "guilty" carry cultural subtleties; translations may change nuance	

Improving the CAGE Questionnaire

1. **Use a Likert scale**

Change responses to "Never – Rarely – Sometimes – Often" to capture intensity and frequency.

2. **Add a timeframe**

Precede with: "Over the past 30 days…", e.g., "Over the past month, how often did you feel guilty…?"

3. **Include quantity/frequency items**

E.g., "In a typical week, how many drinks do you consume?"

4. **Mitigate response bias**

- Assure anonymity or confidentiality.
- Use neutral wording: "How often have you felt you should cut down?"
- Consider forced-choice or randomized technique for sensitive content
5. **Pilot test and cultural review**

Evaluate phrasing across languages and cultural contexts to avoid misinterpretation .

Final Revised Question Example (with Likert Scale & Timeframe)

- Over the past 30 days, how often have you:
- Felt you should cut down on your drinking?
- Had others criticize your drinking?
- Felt guilty about your drinking?
- Needed a drink first thing in the morning (eye-opener)?

- Response options: Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Always

Reflection

- Purpose alignment: Each question aims to screen for problematic drinking patterns—but they should collectively address both emotional and behavioral aspects.

- Appropriate format: The simple yes/no approach is fast but misses gradation. Likert scales and contextual questions provide depth.

- Bias & usability considerations: Confidentiality, neutral wording, and culturally-aware phrasing are essential for honest and valid responses.