

Guidelines for participation on taste panel adapted from Bodyfelt et al. (1988)

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Be prepared, physically and mentally. Panelists should be undistracted by hunger, meal residuals or any environmental factor or physiological state which would divert attention from accurate tasting.

Show up on time. Let the experimenter know if you'll be absent or late.

Do not smoke, drink or eat for at least 1 hour before participation.

Do not wear perfume, cologne, aftershave, etc. Avoid fragranced soaps, hand lotions, and deodorants.

Know the questionnaire. Panelists should always be familiar with the ballot or questionnaire. Insist on some orientation. Do not pick up a questionnaire and go to work without instructions.

Do not participate in any evaluation unless you have been properly trained. It is the obligation of the principal investigator to arrange for your training.

Taste the samples properly tempered (served at the proper temperature).

Taste a representative portion.

Observe the aroma immediately after opening the sample.

Taste a sufficient volume.

Pay attention to the sequence of flavors. Some flavors have immediate impact (oxidation flavors, sour and salty) while others (bitterness, astringency) may take a while to develop. Others may be only aftertastes.

Rinse occasionally as the situation warrants. Different products have different 'saturating' properties. The mouth should always be rinsed after a strong flavor. Unsalted crackers or other palate cleansers may be used.

Use a warm-up sample, if offered. It's a good idea to "condition" the palate by trying a control product when starting out. Otherwise the first sample is too far from the baseline conditions of the oral cavity and difficult to evaluate.

Practice introspection. Concentrate. Think about your sensations and block out all other distractions.

Do not be too critical. Avoid making the error of assuming that just because you've been given some products to evaluate, there must be something wrong with them. Don't find problems just to hedge your bets. Also, do not be too lenient just to please the experimenter.

Don't change your mind. For some people, first impressions can often be the most accurate. Re-tasting may not help, particularly in light of taste and odor adaptation. Try this out for yourself and develop a strategy which works the best for you.

Check your scoring. Get feedback on blind-coded samples. What did other panelists say? Were there replicate samples, and if so, did you score them similarly?

Be honest with yourself. In spite of everyone's best efforts, the identity of samples may not be completely unknown to evaluators, i.e., the test may not be totally blind. Try to avoid influences from prior knowledge and also concerns about what other judges are doing.

In the face of other conflicting opinions, "stick to your guns" if you believe you're right.

Practice. Experience and expertise come slowly. Be patient.

Be professional.

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