



Effective Survey Questions: Some Practical Tips

If you determine that you want to use a survey to assess your outcome, check for a standardized, professionally-developed instrument. Expertly generated, valid survey instruments that relate to your outcome may already exist. Don't reinvent the wheel or generate a flawed instrument when you don't have to. Ask for help from someone who is trained so as not to waste your time or the time of your respondents.

Keep each question short.

- Use basic vocabulary.
- Ask only one question in each question. For example, "In disciplining your child, do you state the rule clearly and explain the consequences of breaking the rule?" is two questions.
- Think about words and phrases that may have double meaning. This is especially true if the person writing the question is of a different age, cultural or ethnic background, or level of education than the person who is responding.
- Make sure nothing in the question, including the response choices, suggests a "right" answer.
- Be sure instructions are short and explicit.
- Choose each question carefully. What will you do with the information? If you do not know, do not ask.
- Be specific about time frames. For example, say "within the past three months" rather than "recently."
- Read each question out loud, pre-test with some typical respondents and have someone experienced in questionnaire development review the questionnaire before it is finalized.
- Group related questions together. Start with the least personal and most obviously relevant set of questions.

If you are interested in **client or customer satisfaction survey**, one of the most useful and time tested assessment tools was developed at the University of California, San Francisco. Two well-worded basic questions are the following:

If a friend were in need of similar help, would you recommend our program to him or her?

1	2	3	4
No, definitely not	No, I don't think so	Yes, I think so	Yes, definitely

In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with the service you have received?

1	2	3	4
Very Satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Indifferent or mildly dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied



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