A Crash Course in Developing Survey Questions

Handout and more resources: www.evalu-ate.org/webinars/feb-19/
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**BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**PRINCIPLE 1**

Language is simple and direct; questions are free from jargon, acronyms, and ambiguous terms.

1. How important do you think it is to use Item Response Theory to validate survey instruments?  
   - Not at all important  
   - Somewhat important  
   - Very important  

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

2. How confident are you in your survey development and administration skills?  
   - Not at all confident  
   - Somewhat confident  
   - Very confident

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**PRINCIPLE 2**
Each question asks about only one thing at a time.

2. How confident are you in your survey development and administration skills?
   - Not at all confident
   - Somewhat confident
   - Very confident

**PRINCIPLE 2**
Each question asks about only one thing at a time.

1. How confident are you in your **survey development** skills?
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

2. How confident are you in your **survey administration** skills?
   - Not at all confident
   - Somewhat confident
   - Very confident

**PRINCIPLE 3**
No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

3. It will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

“I disagree it will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.”

**PRINCIPLE 3**
No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

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3 It will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly agree

PRINCIPLE 3
No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

4 I will be able to apply what I learned in this presentation.
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly agree

PRINCIPLE 4
Response options are exhaustive; all reasonable answers to a question are included, with an other option if needed.

4 Which of the following best describes you?
   ○ Internal evaluator
   ○ External evaluator
   ○ Evaluation manager
   ○ Evaluation commissioner
   ○ Other ______________

5 In the past 12 months, how many conferences have you attended that had an evaluation focus?
   ○ 0 - 1
   ○ 1 - 2
   ○ 2 - 3
   ○ 3 - 4
   ○ 4 or more
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PRINCIPLE 5
Response options are mutually exclusive; possible answers do not overlap.

5 In the past 12 months, how many conferences have you attended that had an evaluation focus?
○ 0 - 1
○ 1 - 2
○ 2 - 3
○ 3 - 4
○ 4 or more

PRINCIPLE 5
Response options are mutually exclusive; i.e., possible answers do not overlap.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

6 Evaluators should be trained in survey development.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

I am very knowledgeable about survey development.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

I have received training about survey development.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

PRINCIPLE 6
Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

6 Evaluators should be trained in survey development. Agreement scales work well with opinion questions.

I am very knowledgeable about survey development. Adverbs in question stem confound agreement scale.

I have received training about survey development. Action – yes/no or frequency

PRINCIPLE 6
Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

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**PRINCIPLE 6**
Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluators should be trained in survey development</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am knowledgeable about survey development</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you completed a training session on survey development in the past 12 months?</td>
<td>○ Yes</td>
<td>○ No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What problem(s) do you see in this question?**

**PRINCIPLE 7**
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

**What is your opinion of the overall quality of this presentation?**

- Met my expectations
- Good
- Very good
- Exceeded my expectations

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PRINCIPLE 7
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

8 In the past 12 months, what types of training on surveys development have you attended?
  ○ Academic course
  ○ In-person workshop
  ○ Online workshop or webinar
  ○ Other
  ○ Not applicable/did not attend other training
  ○ Don’t know

PRINCIPLE 8
Don’t know and not applicable are included only when they are reasonable responses.

8 In the past 12 months, what types of training on surveys development have you attended?
  ○ Academic course
  ○ In-person workshop
  ○ Online workshop or webinar
  ○ Other
  ○ Not applicable/did not attend other training
  ○ Don’t know
How do members of your local community feel about completing surveys?
- Very negative
- Somewhat negative
- Neutral
- Somewhat positive
- Very positive

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

What do you think are the most important considerations when it comes to multi-modal surveys?

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

How many surveys have you developed throughout your career?

How long have you been an evaluator?
- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16 or more years
PRINCIPLE 10
All questions are appropriate for all respondents; branching is used when one or more questions are pertinent to only certain types of respondents.

Are you an evaluator?
10
○ No
○ Yes

How long have you been an evaluator?
○ Less than 1 year
○ 1-5 years
○ 6-10 years
○ 11-15 years
○ 16 or more years

Hello!

You are being contacted to participate in a survey about your experience in this training regarding survey development. Please follow the link below in order to participate.

www.surveylink.com

Your feedback is very important to us.

Thank you for participating in this survey!

We will ask you questions about your recent experience attending a training on survey development.

Your feedback is very important to us.

You are receiving this survey because you participated in a training activity about survey development.

You provided your email address in order to receive follow up information and resources.

The next few questions will ask you about your experience, satisfaction, and learning during the training.

Please respond whether you agree or disagree with each statement using the following response options:
1 = Strongly agree (SA)
2 = Agree (A)
3 = Disagree (D)
4 = Strongly disagree (SD)

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PRINCIPLE 11
Entire questionnaire is as concise as possible; extraneous or duplicate information is omitted from questions, instructions, and communications.

1. This training met my expectations.
2. The instructor was engaging and knowledgeable.

What is your racial/ethnic identity?
- African American / Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander / Alaska Native
- Multiracial
- White
- Prefer to self-identify: ____________

What is your gender identity?
- Female
- Male
- Prefer to self-identify: ____________

Am I planning to analyze survey results by racial or gender categories?
- African American / Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Pacific Islander / Alaska Native
- Multiracial
- White
- Prefer to self-identify: ____________

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PRINCIPLE 12
All questions support the survey’s purpose, which is aligned with a larger research or evaluation question.

Ways to pretest your survey:

- Checklists and assessment tools
- Expert review
- Think-aloud
- Focus group
- Pilot testing

OTHER RESOURCES
Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014)

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