

Introduction to Surveys

Five steps to a survey:

1. **Planning:** Identify your target population and determine how the survey will be administered (i.e., online).

2. **Sampling:** Determine how you will select your sample from your target population. The size of your sample population is dependent on the degree of accuracy that you wish to obtain (confidence level). An acceptable margin of error or confidence interval is 5%. In other words, one can be confident with their sample if their estimates are correct 95% of the time. A simple sample size calculator is located at: <http://www.researchinfo.com/docs/calculators/samplesize.cfm>.

3. **Creating the survey:** Develop your survey. There are five basic types of survey questions.

A. Fill-in the blank

B. Checklist (check all that apply)

C. Scaled items (rating a concept, i.e., rating student reading skills from very poor to excellent)

D. Ranking (i.e., rank in order of difficulty)

E. Likert-scale (personal views of statements on a continuum, i.e., strongly agree to strongly disagree)

i. When developing survey questions, please consider the following:

a. Questions should be short and simple.

b. The simplest language possible should be used.

c. Avoid ambiguous and leading questions.

d. Avoid predetermined responses by avoiding stereotypes or emotionally-loaded questions.

e. Avoid questions that lead to assumptions.

f. Avoid questions that might make a person embarrassed or hostile.

g. Keep a survey as brief as possible.

h. Avoid questions where the respondent may lack the knowledge needed to respond.

ii. When creating a survey, please consider question order and formatting:

- a. Interesting questions should be first and demographic questions should be last.
- b. Questions should follow a logical sequence.
- c. Similar questions should be grouped together.
- d. Questions should be numbered consecutively.
- e. Response options should be listed vertically and not horizontally.
- f. The survey should have a professional appearance. The use of color should be kept at a minimum.

iii. **Validity:** Validity means that the survey measures what it is supposed to. All surveys should have face validity. Face validity indicates that the survey appears valid for its intended purposes. Face validity can be determined by having a topic expert review the survey.

iv. **Reliability:** Reliability indicates that the survey measures the same dimensions every time the survey is administered. Survey reliability can be determined giving a respondent the survey during two different time intervals and then comparing their responses for internal consistency.

v. **Cover Letter:** A cover letter should contain the following:

- a. Survey purpose
- b. A request for cooperation
- c. Information regarding the confidentiality of their responses
- d. Information regarding who is sponsoring the survey
- e. An offer to provide survey result
- f. Express gratitude for the respondent's time
- g. Request that the respondent complete the survey as soon as possible

vi. **Informed consent:** Informed consent is the disclosure of a survey's purpose, process, benefits/risks and confidentiality of the information provided by survey respondents. An informed consent sample is located on the IRPE website: .

vii. **Ethical Research:** IRPE follows the ethical guidelines set by the American Educational Research Association and the Association of Institutional Research. These guidelines are located on the IRPE website at: .

4. **Conducting the survey:** Field-test and then administer your survey. Field-testing a survey means to have people that are familiar with the topic take the survey to identify any survey misinterpretations or shortcomings. If you will be surveying a large sample size, you may want to pilot your survey prior to your large-scaled survey administration.

A. **Follow-ups:** The survey duration is limited to 10 business days. Therefore, it is suggested that one survey reminder email be sent to respondents on the 5th business day.

5. **Analyzing the data:** Conduct statistical analysis of the survey data and report your findings. Most survey analyses consist of frequencies and percentages. It is suggested that that you work with IRPE if you need more elaborate statistical analyses of your data.