

How to Make a Questionnaire

When a company, non-profit group, or politician needs to find out how their stakeholders or constituents feel, they often create and implement a questionnaire. The results can lead to re-branding, decision-making, and policy changes if the...

Part 1 of 3:

Creating Questions



1.

Decide what you want to learn from administering your questionnaire.^[1] Ask yourself what data you require and how you will use it. This will help you come up with useful questions, as well as the order in which you will ask them.

Tip: Ideally, the questionnaire will be short, so decide which of your goals are essential and which might be unnecessary.

2.



Plan questions that will help you get the information you need. Begin with a broad span of questions, then narrow them down until each one relates to your goals in some way. Keep questions and answers simple, using as few words as possible. You may want to rely on open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, or a mix of the two.

3.



Use closed-ended questions to gather specific answers. Closed-ended questions have a specific range of options respondents can choose from. ^[2] These questions may be yes-or-no questions, true-or-false questions, or questions that ask the respondent to agree or disagree with a statement. Closed-ended questions may look like open-ended questions, but will have only a few options respondents can use to answer. Closed-ended questions might look like these:

1. "Have you shopped here before?"
2. "If so, how often do you shop here?" (This question would have a few explicit answers from which respondents could choose--"once a week" to "once a month," for instance)

3. "How satisfied were you with your experience today?" (Likewise, this question would have limited responses--"very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied")
4. "Would you recommend this store to a friend?"



Use open-ended questions to solicit feedback. Open-ended questions solicit answers that you may not anticipate, and do not have a specific range of answers to choose from. Open-ended questions are a chance for respondents to communicate their specific experience or expectations. Such questions might look like these:

1. "How will you use your purchase?"
2. "Where else do you normally shop?"
3. "Who referred you to this store?"
4. Open-ended questions are good for clarifying a previous answer--"Why do you feel this way?"



Ask questions in such a way as to avoid confusion and bias. Avoid leading questions especially; Leading questions indicate that the asker is looking for a certain answer and will limit what answers your responders are comfortable supplying. Either tailor possible answers or change the wording of your question so as to avoid leading your respondents to answer in a particular way.

1. Questions should be worded so as to maximize clarity. Confused respondents will skew your data, so questions should be as understandable as possible. Avoid double negatives, unnecessary clauses, or unclear subject-object relationships.

Note: You may consider asking the same question in different ways, **which may reduce overall respondent bias** and give you a better chance of finding the person's true opinion on a given topic.^[3]

Part 2 of 3:

Implementing the Questionnaire



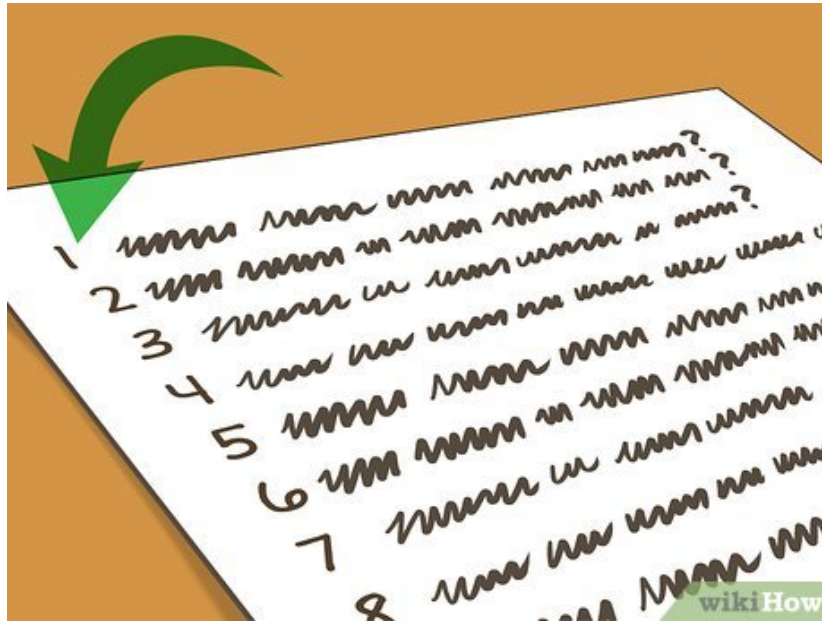
Think about how you will deliver your questionnaire. There are many options open to you. You may use an online service to design your questionnaire. You can then send links to your questionnaire over e-mail. You may use a phone or mail campaign to cold-call respondents. Or you can execute a campaign in-person, using professionals or volunteers to lead surveys.



Design your questionnaire according to your delivery method. There are advantages and disadvantages to each method, and each method has limits on what you can do. Ask yourself which delivery method best suits the subject matter of your questionnaire, as well as the data you want to receive. For instance:

1. Surveys delivered on the computer, by phone, and by mail can reach a broad range of people, whereas surveys administered in-person are time-intensive and limits who can participate (which may be useful).
2. Surveys delivered on the computer, in person, and by mail can utilize pictures, whereas phone interviews cannot.
3. Respondents may be too shy to answer certain questions in person or by phone. Decide if you want to give clarifications to your questions if the respondent doesn't understand something; only interviews given by a live person can deliver clarifications.
4. A computer survey will require the respondent to have access to a computer. If your questionnaire concerns private issues, a computer survey may work best. [4]

3.



Consider the order of your questions. The form of your questionnaire matters just as much as its content. You should aim to order questions so that they follow each other logically or mark clear shifts from section to section. Other kinds of questions may impact how a respondent fills out the questionnaire.

1. "Qualifiers" are questions that screen certain respondents out, preventing them from completing other questions. Position these at the beginning of your questionnaire.
2. If demographics are of major concern, ask demographic questions up front.
3. Save personal or complicated questions for the end of the questionnaire. Respondents will not feel as overwhelmed by these questions and may be more likely to be open and honest.

Note: You may want to order the questions so that if a person says yes or no to a certain question, they bypass any questions that don't apply to them. **This will help keep the questionnaire focused and take less time to complete.**

4.



Decide if you will offer incentives for completing the questionnaire. It's often easier to attract respondents if you offer something in return for their time. Online, mail, or phone questionnaires could offer a coupon after questionnaire completion. In-person questionnaires could offer merchandise in exchange for participation. Questionnaires are also a good way to attract attention to mailing lists or membership offers, which may otherwise go unnoticed by respondents.

5.



Test your questionnaire before you begin surveying people. Friends, employees and family members can be good testers. You may have them try your questionnaire while it's still in development, or you may have them test a finished draft.

1. Ask your testers for feedback. They may alert you to sections that confused them or felt out of place. User impressions about the questionnaire are just as important as the actual questionnaire.
2. After you test, do some number crunching to ensure you are collecting the data you need. If you are not getting the information you want, adjust the questionnaire. You may need to reword some

things, add introductions, or rearrange, add, or delete questions so your questionnaire leads you toward your goals.

Part 3 of 3:

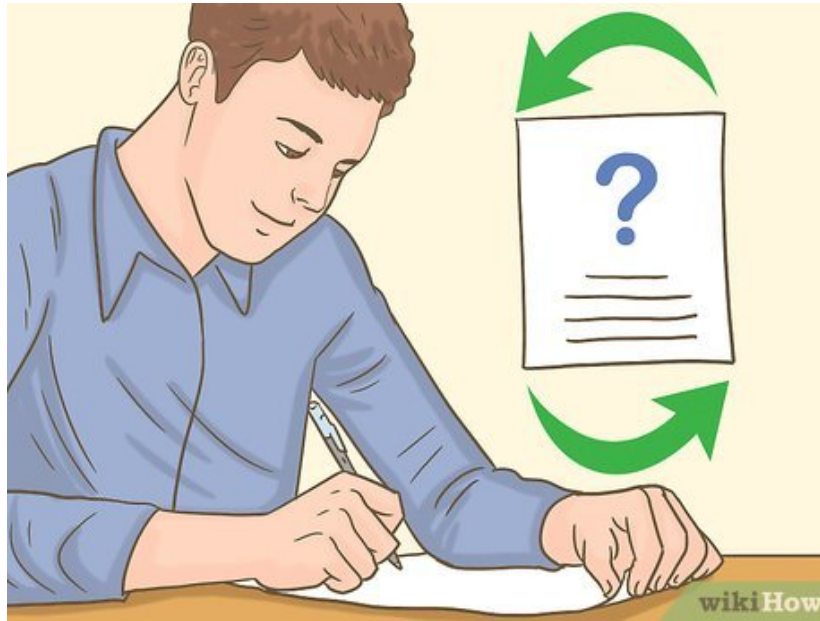
Revising the Questionnaire



Review your data to understand what your questionnaire was really asking. Remember that a questionnaire is often part of a larger campaign. They can be altered and reused multiple times in order to target different demographics, ask different questions, or better align with your goals. After reviewing your results, you may find that, though your questions make sense, they aren't quite the right ones you need to achieve your goals.

1. For instance, you may find that a question such as "How often do you shop here?" limits your demographic to those who shop at a brick-and-mortar store. If you want to see how people purchase a specific product, you may want to broaden your question to include online shopping.
2. Your implementation method may also be limiting your data. For instance, surveys administered online may be answered largely by respondents with higher-than-average computer knowledge.

2.



Further revise your questions. Some of your questions may work during testing, but may not work as well out in the field. Your questions must make sense to the specific demographic you are targeting. Ask yourself if your respondents are truly understanding what is being asked, or if your survey is so standard that respondents are not responding thoughtfully.

1. For instance, a question such as, "Why do you shop here?" may be too broad a question, which could mislead your respondents. If you want to know if the store's decor has an impact on shopping habits, you could instead ask respondents to describe how they feel about the store's decor, branding, etc.

3.



Review your open-ended questions. See if your open-ended questions are working the way you need them to work. They may be too open, in which case respondents may ramble. They may not be open enough, in which case the data you received won't be as valuable. Ask yourself what role your open-ended questions are playing in your questionnaire and tailor them as needed.

1. As above, broad questions such as, "How do you feel while shopping here?" may not give your respondents enough direction. You could instead ask, "Would you recommend this store to your friends? Why or why not?"

4.



Decide how you will respond to missing data. Not all respondents will answer all questions, which may or may not be a problem for you. ^[5] Ask yourself which questions are being skipped or answered incompletely, if at all. This may be due to the order of the questions, the wording of the questions, or the subject matter of the questions. If missing data is important, consider rewording skipped questions to make them more or less specific.

5.



Review what sort of feedback you are receiving. See if you have unusual trends in your data and decide if this reflects reality or if this is due to a flaw in your questionnaire. For instance, your closed-question answers will limit the sort of information your respondents can give you. Your answers may be so limited as to make strong opinions look the same as weak opinions, or may not provide for a full range of

reasonable answers.

1. For instance, if you are asking respondents to rate an experience, you should provide them with the option to respond with "very dissatisfied" as well as "very satisfied," and many options in between.

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