

# How to write effective survey questions

## QUICK START GUIDE

### Do's and don'ts

Here are some tips for writing questions that help you gather accurate and actionable results, which will lead to stronger insights and better business decisions.

|                    | Do ...                                                                                                                                                         | Don't ...                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Neutrality</b>  | Use impartial language.<br><br>Good: How would you rate the ease of use of this product?                                                                       | Use words and phrases that might influence respondents.<br><br>Poor: How easy is it to use this product?                                 |
| <b>Scope</b>       | Ask about one topic or issue at a time.<br><br>Good: How satisfied were you with the in-store experience?                                                      | Ask about multiple aspects in the same question.<br><br>Poor: How satisfied were you with the in-store experience and product selection? |
| <b>Simplicity</b>  | Phrase your questions in a simple, easy-to-understand way.<br><br>Good: Which customer relationship management (CRM) platform does your company currently use? | Assume respondents know technical terms or abbreviations.<br><br>Poor: Which CRM does your company currently use?                        |
| <b>Specificity</b> | Be specific about timeframes, conditions, and other parameters.<br><br>Good: How has your usage of Product X changed since last year?                          | Leave questions open to interpretation.<br><br>Poor: How has your usage of Product X changed?                                            |

## Do's and don'ts (continued)

|                                  | Do ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Don't ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Expansive options</b>         | <p>Present multiple options to avoid bias and collect more accurate data.</p> <p>Good: Which of the following cloud computing platforms do you use?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Use yes/no questions that focus on a single aspect.</p> <p>Poor: Do you use Platform X?</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Exhaustive options</b>        | <p>Offer mutually exclusive response options that cover all possible choices and preferences.</p> <p>Good: What types of pets do you have in your household? Select all that apply:</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Cat<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Dog<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Bird<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="text"/><br/> <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above         </p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Offer "other" and "none of the above" options when appropriate to ensure all possible options are covered.</p> | <p>Omit possible choices from the range of responses.</p> <p>Poor: What types of pets do you have in your household? Select all that apply:</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Cat<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> Dog         </p>                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Complete numerical ranges</b> | <p>When asking about a numerical range, offer discrete values that cover all possible responses.</p> <p>Good: How many employees are in your company across all locations? Your best estimate is fine.</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 10-49<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 50-99<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 100-499<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 500-999<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1,000-4,999<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 5,000 or more         </p>                                                        | <p>Provide overlapping values or omit possible responses in a numerical range.</p> <p>Poor: How many employees are in your company?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> 1-10<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 10-50<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 50-100<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 100-500<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 500-1,000<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1,000-5,000         </p> |

# Choosing the most appropriate question type

Writing effective survey questions starts with knowing what type of question to ask. Here are five commonly used types.

| Question type                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Use it when you need to ...                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Multiple choice (single select)</p> <p><input type="radio"/><br/><input checked="" type="radio"/><br/><input type="radio"/><br/><input type="radio"/><br/><input type="radio"/></p>                             | <p>Get one response from a list of options.</p> <p>Example: What is your age range?</p>                                                                                                            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Multiple choice (multiple select)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/><br/><input type="checkbox"/><br/><input checked="" type="checkbox"/><br/><input checked="" type="checkbox"/><br/><input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>Get one or more responses from a list of options.</p> <p>Example: Which of the following products have you purchased in the past month?</p>                                                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Scale rating</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 — <input type="radio"/> 2 — <input type="radio"/> 3 — <input type="radio"/> 4 — <input type="radio"/> 5</p>                                                         | <p>Measure responses on a predefined numerical scale.</p> <p>Example: How would you rate this product on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is extremely unsatisfied, and 5 is completely satisfied?</p> |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Matrix</p> <table><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | <p>Ask a series of related questions with the same response options.</p> <p>Example: How would you describe your familiarity with the following brands?</p> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>Open-ended</p> <div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Ask for additional feedback or information in a text field.</p> <p>Example: What other features would make our product more useful?</p>                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                             |

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