

Asking Good Survey Questions

When conducting a data project the first step is to clearly define your question. Once you know what information you need, you must design your survey to get that information. When creating questions, you should follow these guidelines:

- **Use as few questions as possible.** It is, however, better to have data that you don't use than to need data that you don't have.
 - **Use simple words.** The people who you are surveying should understand what you are asking.
 - **Don't ask leading questions.** If you ask what kind of cake you want, that assumes that you want cake in the first place.
 - **Avoid double negatives.** The statement, "True or false: You don't have no computer at home" really says, "True or false: You have a computer."
 - **Don't make the list of choices too long.**
 - **Try to get measurement data from your survey.** For example, instead of saying, "What is your favorite soda, Coke or Pepsi?" ask, "Rate Coke on a scale of one to five, with one being least favorite and five being most favorite." You can ask the same about Pepsi. You can then use many more graphs to illustrate the responses.
 - **Use close-ended questions instead of open-ended.** This limits the choice of answers and allows you to more easily display the results.
 - **Put your questions in logical order.**
 - **Don't use biased words.** For example, in the question, "Should we forbid prayer in schools?" the word "forbid" connotes a strong feeling.
 - **Always pretest your survey.**
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