Best Practices for Creating Surveys

1. At the beginning of the survey, provide the respondents with:
   - Clear instructions
   - Purpose of the survey
   - Estimated completion time (to take the survey)
   - Assurance that their answers will remain anonymous
   - What will be done with the survey data that you collect.

2. Provide clear survey responses:
   - Yes or No
   - True or False
   - Consider using a 5-point Likert scale when you create survey questions.
   - Etc.

3. Be careful how you group your questions.
   - The first question should engage the respondent to *get them in the flow.*
   - Place demographic questions at the end of the survey to avoid response bias.
   - Earlier questions in a survey can affect how respondents respond to later questions.

4. Group similar questions together in the same section. Use titles to introduce each section.

5. Avoid double-barreled questions (such as using the word "and") because a survey question should only have <u>one</u> single concept in it.

6. Keep your questions (and answer choices) short, simple and clear. Why? Because respondents are less likely to answer:
   - Long, complicated, and confusing questions.
   - Respondents will not finish your survey if it is too hard

7. Avoid using jargon and technical terms, such as:
   - BATF
   - JTTF
   - CPS
   - CIA
   - CID
   - IRS
   - PD
   - Etc.

8. Create questions that will give you precise answers.

9. Avoid leading questions, such as:
   - "When did you stop beating your wife?"
     - ✓ That question is biased because it implies that the respondent is a wife beater.
     - ✓ Survey questions should not have biased answers built into them.

10. Do not provide more than 10 answers to select from when you create a question.

11. Select needed classifications of respondents that are appropriate for the topic that you are researching, such as:
    - o   Victims
    - o   Witnesses
    - o   Officers
    - o   City Council Members
    - o   Citizens
    - o   Neighbors
    - o   Friends
    - o   Customers
    - o   Immigrants
    - o   Students
    - o   [INSERT YOUR NEEDED CLASSIFICAITON HERE]
    - o   Etc.

12. Select the smallest sample size possible to meet your needs.

13. Include a "Thank You" statement at the end of the survey.

14. Before you conduct issue your survey, contact your Institutional Review Board (IRB) for:

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    - o   Approval of your created survey and
    - o   Permission to issue it to respondents.

15. Once you've created your survey:
    - o   Send it to a few friends or colleagues to try it
    - o   Ask them how long it took to complete the survey
    - o   Did their survey answers provide you with useful data?

16. Response rates to online surveys usually range from 30 to 60%.

17. Be respectful of those who do not wish to take your survey.

References

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