

Tips on response options for surveys ...

Weiss on survey utility

- The utility of a survey depends on the “quality” of the questions it contains. *Think of this statement as a “guiding principle” to live by!*

Response options: a myriad of choices

The following are response options to think about when writing surveys; they are all representative of the structure known as the intensity scale. Some are designed to tap knowledge, some to tap reactions, and some to tap attitudes. One way to ensure a more focused data collection effort is to design the specificity of the responses (e.g., the type of information in which you’re interested) to align with your targeted subissues.

Remember to always indicate *how* you want people to respond, as illustrated in Example 4.

Example 1:

How important is each of the following ingredients to making ice cream?

Some choices: sugar, milk, butter, eggs, etc.

Response scale: *Not important to Critically important*

Example 2:

How relevant to your job were each of the following activities in today’s workshop?

Some choices: learning basic HTML tags, learning how to change background and font colors, learning how to create tables, learning how to create a navigation bar, etc.

Response scale: *Not relevant at all to Extremely relevant*

Example 3:

How well do you rate your ability to do each of the following?

Some choices: upload documents to the web, create pdf files, etc.

Weak to Strong or Novice to Highly skilled

Example 4:

For each of the following items, please (check, circle, click) the box that best indicates how often your teacher does the following:

- Encourages those of us with computers at home to use them to do our homework.
- Provides feedback on our daily work
- Models good technical writing

Rarely or never to Always or most of the time

Never, once a week, several times a time, everyday

Just a note that this example represents one of the most common “flaws” in survey design – measuring “good” teaching by focusing on frequency or amount. During the course of the semester, we’ll cover the “dangers” of using these indicators to infer quality or appropriateness.

Example 5:

Please rate your satisfaction with the performance of our service team in each of the following areas:

- a) Explanation of likely problems with the car.

Largely dissatisfied to Highly satisfied

Another variation:

Please rate the professionalism of our service team in each of the following areas.

Unprofessional to Highly professional

Example 6:

Please check the box that most closely corresponds to your perspective on each of the items that follow:

- a) I am always one of the first people to use a new technology.

Strongly disagree to Strongly agree

This is the traditional Likert item. Yes ... there really was someone named Likert. In 1932, Renis Likert (1903 to 1981) pioneered this measurement method for measuring attitudes.

So you know, nearly everyone misuses the "Likert" label – "giving" it to any scale that measures an attitude unidimensionally.

Likert focused on management; a brief synopsis of his major ideas is available at: <http://www.people.vcu.edu/~rsleeth/Likert01.html>.

A nicely articulated process for developing Likert-style items is available at: <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/scallik.htm> -- part of a set of measurement links on our own website.

Example 7:

To what extent have each of the following been important in helping you develop your skills in technology?

- a) Workshops
b) Mentoring by peers
c) Degree program

Not at all important to Very important

Example 8:

Describe the level of support provided by your supervisor in each of the following areas:

- a) Participation in professional growth activities

Limited support to Highly supported

Example 9:

Rate your ability in using each of the following types of software:

a) Word processing

Three options: *Novice, Intermediate, Advanced*

Example 10:

Following are ten tasks typically performed by flight attendants on short flights (e.g., 400 miles or less). Rank these tasks according to the frequency with which you generally perform them. Use *1* to indicate the task you perform most frequently and *10* to indicate the task you perform least often.