

## QUESTION #95

# I Need to Build My Own Survey. What Are the Characteristics of Good Survey Questions?

**T**he quality of a survey is a function of the quality of the questions asked. While there are entire books full of guidelines for survey item construction, following just nine simple rules will go a long way toward creating a valid and reliable survey instrument.

Here are some sensible survey construction suggestions:

### 1. Use simple wording.

Bad: *When you sit down for breakfast each morning, how often do you eat eggs?*

Better: *How often do you eat eggs for breakfast?*

### 2. Use appropriate vocabulary and phrasing.

Word your questions the way that your population talks and thinks.

### 3. Avoid including more than one idea in a question.

Bad: *Do you think that eggs are healthy and tasty?*

Better: *Do you think eggs are healthy?*

*Do you think eggs are tasty?*

### 4. Avoid negatively worded items.

Bad: *Do you agree or disagree that eggs are not good for you?*

Better: *Do you agree or disagree that eggs are good for you?*

### 5. Avoid the use of abbreviations.

Try not to use technical jargon from your field including abbreviations and acronyms.

### 6. Avoid hypothetical questions.

Bad: *If the cost of eggs increased, how would you feel?*

Better: *How do you feel about the cost of eggs?*

**7. Avoid the use of nonspecific quantitative adverbs.**

Bad: *How often do you have eggs for breakfast?*

1. Frequently
2. Sometimes
3. Rarely

Better: *How often do you have eggs for breakfast?*

1. 5 or more times a week
2. 1–4 times a week
3. Less than once a week

**8. Write questions with balanced answer options.**

Bad: *How would you rate the taste of eggs?*

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. OK
4. Bad

Better: *How would you rate the taste of eggs?*

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Bad
4. Very Bad

**9. Avoid related questions; combine them into one question if possible.**

Bad: 1. *Have you ordered eggs at a restaurant?*

1. Yes
2. No (If “No” please skip Question 2.)

2. *How would you rate the taste of eggs when you order them at restaurants?*

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Bad
4. Very Bad

Better: 1. *How would you rate the taste of eggs when you order them at restaurants?*

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Bad
4. Very Bad

N.A. *I never order eggs at restaurants.*

*More questions? See #59, #62, and #94.*