



Bad Survey Questions Assignment

Survey questions should not be lengthy, difficult to answer, or ego-threatening. Most surveys, unless used for industry or consumer research among those with a known level of education, should be written at the 6th-grade reading level (especially general population consumer surveys). Following this approach helps keep questions clear and concise for most potential respondents.

Below are common survey question development mistakes that should be avoided. Responses to questions with such mistakes are often skewed and unreliable.

Common Question Development Mistakes to Avoid

- 1 Complex questions** contain multiple components and/or stipulations.

Example

If you attended the art museum more than five years ago, rate how well the museum compares to your visit today. Please exclude visits to the art museum in the past two to three years.

This question has too many stipulations. It should be simplified and broken into more than one question.

- 2 Leading questions** are slanted to imply a preference for a particular response, thus biasing the result.

Example

How do you rate our exceptional oil change service?

This question rates the oil change as exceptional and then asks the person answering to provide a rating. This can skew responses provided. Removing the word “exceptional” from the sentence would make this question better.

- 3 Loaded questions** suggest respondents give a socially desirable answer.

Example

Rate how likely you are to declaw your next cat, considering that declawing is deemed inhumane by most veterinarians.

Including the phrase “considering that declawing is deemed inhumane by most veterinarians” can skew respondents’ answers. Excluding that phrase would make this question better.

- 4 Ambiguous questions** are too vague, causing respondents to interpret the meaning on their own.

Example

Is the doctor knowledgeable?

While this question may seem clear, it's ambiguous because it doesn't specify the type of "knowledge" intended. Asking if the doctor is knowledgeable about a specific topic or issue would make this question better.

- 5 Double-barreled questions** contain two questions in one. Such questions can usually be identified by the inclusion of "and" or by lists of several items.

Example

Rate your awareness of the American Cancer Society and the services they offer.

Results from this question will not be meaningful because respondents are likely averaging together their rating of the two concepts. If the concepts were separated (a question about overall awareness followed by questions about individual services), different responses would likely be given.

Assignment

Below is a list of bad survey questions. Read each question and classify it as one of the following:

- **Complex question**
- **Leading question**
- **Loaded question**
- **Ambiguous question**
- **Double-barreled question**

1. How often do you buy a new phone and where do you buy it from?

- Mistake

2. If you don't drink coffee and buy more than three energy drinks a week, what flavors do you buy?

- Mistake

3. Rate how likely you are to buy this shoe that news reports indicate is made with child labor.

- Mistake

4. Was your customer support representative helpful?

- Mistake

5. How likely are you to recommend our restaurant's delicious food?
 - Mistake
6. Did we meet your expectations during your last visit?
 - Mistake
7. If you had to get to school using a bicycle, bus, train, car, or on foot, which would you choose? Consider how often it rains, your transportation budget, and carpooling opportunities.
 - Mistake
8. How often do you buy new tires and how much do you typically spend?
 - Mistake
9. How would you rate your coach's poor leadership?
 - Mistake
10. If you've eaten a meal at our restaurant in the past six months and have also eaten the same meal more than a year ago, rate how well the dish you ate in the past six months compares to the one you ate more than a year ago.
 - Mistake
11. Rate how likely you are to buy a hydro flask so you can do your part to decrease plastic waste.
 - Mistake
12. What is your favorite food and what restaurant do you buy it from most often?
 - Mistake
13. What do you think about our soap?
 - Mistake
14. How would you rate our company's award-winning customer support?
 - Mistake
15. How likely are you to buy our veggie burgers, considering the poor treatment of cows?
 - Mistake