

# **TIPS: EFFECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRES**

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1. Before developing the questionnaire, gather preliminary information. Interview (informally) a small sample of people – potential respondents, or others – to get a sense of the language and emphases that would be appropriate in the questionnaire.
2. Consider the results you want from the questionnaire. Then identify the questions that will produce this information.
3. During its development, make efforts to focus and limit the questionnaire. Lengthy questionnaires will be answered grudgingly or hastily, if at all. Be mindful of a reasonable amount of time for gathering necessary information.
4. When considering question formats and questionnaire design, respect these factors: the background and job of the respondent, the kind of information-required, the purpose for gathering the information, and its application.
5. Be cautious and minimal in asking for biographical data. Consult your HR department, etc. Phrase such questions tactfully (see the interval scale).
6. If questions refer to grievances and complaints, address these in a straightforward manner. Explain the plan to alleviate problem situations and let respondents know that management recognizes the problems – including those management may not have the power to solve.
7. Keep questions simple and to the point. Do not use the questionnaire as an opportunity to gather information about irrelevant issues; doing so creates doubts about the stated purpose of the questionnaire.
8. Use a questionnaire in conjunction with other methods, as appropriate. Do not regard questionnaire results as ends in themselves, but as stimulation for additional discussion and analysis of problems. For example, during follow-up interviews, solicit respondents' opinions on questionnaire results.
9. Do not administer questionnaires to respondents of low literacy. Instead, use interviews or observation (formal or informal) – methods that do not involve respondents in reading and writing tasks.
10. Be sure that respondents are able to supply the required answers before administering the questionnaire. For example, a word-processing clerk may not be able to comment on the need for improved software design.

11. To determine if the data sought will be useful, assess the questions by anticipating possible responses. Well-designed questions receive few unproductive responses such as, “I can run this department better than my supervisor.”
12. Always pilot the (draft) questionnaire. Ask a sample group or at least two individuals to comment on clarity and format. This feedback should indicate the questions and/or instructions that need editing.
13. The questionnaire should be accompanied by a cover memo. That memo should indicate the general purpose of the questionnaire. As well, it should assure respondents that responses to the questionnaire are deemed to be confidential. “Name optional” and code numbers (instead of names) are common means of supporting confidentiality.
14. When appropriate, share the results of the questionnaire with respondents through a memo or by meeting with them (small groups advised). If you cannot share the results with respondents, send a note thanking respondents for their participation and indicating the potential use of the contributed information.

**Notes:**