



Some Tips on Question Design by Usable Knowledge, LLC is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](#).

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Question Types: Categorical

Q3 How did you first hear about the program?

From another student

From a faculty member

From a Hillel staff person

Article or advertisement in campus newspaper

Information table on campus

Flyer

Internet research (e.g., idealist.org, monster.org, etc)

Other (specify)

The key here is to make sure that all the possible categories are represented. You can use an 'other' category as long as you include a space for the respondent to indicate what the other is. But be careful, too many of these, or not enough attention to providing an exhaustive list of choices is self defeating.



Question Types: Five Point Satisfaction Scale

How satisfied or unsatisfied are you with the homework help your child receives in the afterschool program? Would you say you were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat unsatisfied, very unsatisfied, or not sure?

Very satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Somewhat unsatisfied

Very unsatisfied

Not sure

Note that the question repeats all the possible answer choices. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, it makes all the answers seem equally reasonable (in some sense asking simply ;how satisfied were you... suggests that the respondent was satisfied and that its only a matter of finding out how much). This wording indicates they may have been unsatisfied.

Also note the use of a four point scale. This prevents people from fence sitting. If they are really not sure they have to state this explicitly. In a sense, satisfaction is measured on a scale whereas being not sure is a separate category.

Question Types: Seven Point Agree-Disagree Scale

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“The United States should set a firm date to bring the troops home from Iraq next year.”

- Strongly agree
- Mostly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Strongly disagree

- No opinion

Same idea here except with an agree-disagree scale. Again, note the separate ‘no opinion’ choice at the bottom. We want to discourage people from indicating no opinion but allow them to do so nonetheless.

Question Types: Seven Point Satisfaction Scale

Overall, how satisfied or unsatisfied would you say you are with your counselor's ability to understand you as person?

- Very satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Slightly unsatisfied
- Mostly unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

- No opinion

Same idea here except with six possible answers. The benefit is that this approach tends to lessen any ceiling effects. Think of it like using a ruler (which is what a survey is after all) with finer gradations

Question Types: Matrix Version of Agree- Disagree Scale

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement, after completing the training, with each of the following statements about your knowledge of domestic violence in the workplace.

<i>After experiencing the training I had a good understanding of...</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Agree</i>	<i>Somewhat Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
How domestic violence affects my workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The costs of domestic violence for companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The steps my company can take to address domestic violence for our employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Primary benefit of a matrix question is their efficient use of space. But it may be harder to include more than four answer choices. In this example there wasn't enough room for a 'Don't Know'.

Question Types: Matrix Version of Always – Never Scale

Now we would like to ask you about the homework help your child receives in the afterschool program. Please answer each of the following questions indicating how often each statement is true.


	Always True	Sometimes True	Never True	Not sure
My child is always able to finish his/her homework in the afterschool program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's tutor understands his/her learning needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, I am satisfied with the homework my child receives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question Types: Anchored Scale

How much fun is the afterschool program?

This item uses an anchored scale. It is particularly appropriate if the meaning of term needs to be specified. In this case the term is 'fun'. We found this worked particularly well with children who tend to need something very concrete.

Check the box under the number “1” if you think it’s a lot of fun (like a week in Disney World). Check the box under number “5” if you think it’s more like a rainy Saturday afternoon with nothing to do; or check one of the other boxes if you think it’s somewhere in between.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Week in Disney World	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rainy Saturday afternoon
More Fun						Less Fun

Question Types: Knowledge Question

Q2 Which of these things is the best example of a region?

The small town where a business is located

A group of towns that are close to each other and share some things in common?

A town where there are many government offices

A city with many rivers

Q3 Which one of these is an example of a capital resource?

Machines used to make a product

Trees used to make paper

People who work in city government

Farmland

Question Types: Applied Knowledge Item

The next three questions are about a man named John Valdez who owns a factory that makes crayons. The company that used to sell him the things he needs to make the crayons has gone out of business. He now has to choose between two other companies to supply these things. One company is further away from his factory but charges less money for the ingredients; the other is closer but charges more.

Q11 What questions should John ask in order to help him make a decision?

- How much each company pays its workers
- How much it will cost to transport the ingredients from each of the two companies to his factory?
- If the two companies are both in the same state
- How much money each company pays in taxes

Q12 One thing John could do to help him decide which factory to buy from would be to:

- Ask the government which factory is better
- Count up the advantages and disadvantages of choosing each supplier
- Toss a coin and choose the supplier based on whether it turns up heads or tails
- Study a book about business

Example of Non Biased Wording

For some people, a conscious Jewish identity is not that important; for others, it is very important. Thinking back to the time BEFORE the Summit and in terms of your own outlook on life, how important would you have said being Jewish was to you?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

Asking sensitive questions or questions that you believe may socially desirable answers requires care. The key is to present the choices so that all of them appear to be equally reasonable.

One way to do this is to explicitly state it is perfectly reasonable to select all the choices, even the less socially desirable one. In this question, for a study directed at Jewish young adults, we've accomplished this by indicating that some people may not find a conscious Jewish identity important.

Effect of Category Choice on Response

*Same questions
different answer
choices.*

Time Spent Studying

Questionnaire A:

How many hours per day do you spend studying?

- Less than .5
- 0.5 – 1
- 1 – 1.5
- 1.5 – 2
- 2 – 2.5
- More than 2.5

Questionnaire B:

How many hours per day do you spend studying?

- Less than 2.5
- 2.5 – 3
- 3 – 3.5
- 3.5 – 4
- 4 – 4.5
- More than 4.5

Reported Time Spent Studying

Same questions but note how very different the responses were. Two things to take away. First it's better to ask for an actual number. It avoids this problem and if you need categories you can always create them during the data analysis phase of your project. Also you can do math on a real number, like reporting an average.

If you can't use real numbers for some reason, try to scale your answer choices to the likely respondents. High school kids would probably get the question with the first group of responses whereas law students might get the second.

Reported Hours	Version A		Version B	
	Mail	Phone	Mail	Phone
Less than 2.5 hours	77%	58%	31%	30%
More than 2.5 hours	23%	42%	69%	70%

Use Straightforward Language

Avoid	Use
Employment issues	Job concerns
Occupants of this household	People who live here
Your responses	Your answers
Leisure	Free time
Candid	Honest
Assaulted someone	Got into a fight with someone
The 'correct' grant name	What participants call the program
MDNA	Ecstasy
Abbreviations (e.g., PT)	The full word (e.g., Part time)

Be Clear about Units

Avoid	Use
How old are you?	What is your birthdate?
What is your income?	What is you monthly income?
How much time do you spend studying?	How many hours <i>per week</i> would you say you spend studying?

But be sure the units are scaled to make sense

