

# How to Get the Most Out of a Survey

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“Let’s just do a quick survey.”

— Someone in everyone’s program

Surveys are an easily accessible and commonly used tool in many disciplines. However, the quality of responses and response rate can vary dramatically. Below are some basic tips to maximize your survey.

**Tip 1:** Picking the Right Survey Tool - There are countless survey tools available online. When selecting the application, recognize the services offered, pricing, and complexity of each tool. Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey, and Google Forms are among the most popular tools with specific advantages to each.

- a. Qualtrics: Recommended for large (>10,000 participants) sophisticated surveys that require special types of input, allows survey takers to save their work and return later, or if survey questions need to be integrated with other data sets. This product must be purchased, but many institutions have this tool available for employees.
- b. SurveyMonkey: Recommended for most simple research projects. Service is free with the option for purchase of advanced services.
- c. Google Forms: Recommended for simple research projects. Although it does not include any tools to automate data analysis, you can track and monitor responses.

*See below for sites that review/compare survey tools.*

**Tip 2:** Other Things to Consider - Do you need/require HIPAA compliance? Does your survey support accessibility (like screen readers, text-to-speech tools, or screen magnifiers)? Does your survey support mobile devices?

**Tip 3:** Survey Design - “The Five Tenets of Survey Design” recommends avoiding: agreement response items, multi-barreled items, unlabeled response options, unevenly spaced response options, and non-substantive response options formatted together with substantive response items.<sup>1</sup> *For further explanation and examples, please see the attached table.*

**Tip 4:** Incentives - Studies have shown that surveys providing incentives have significantly improved response rates.<sup>4</sup> The mean response rates for surveys providing incentives was above 70%.

**Tip 5:** Time Commitment - Be upfront with how long the survey will take. This enables participants to plan appropriately.

Sites that review/compare survey tools:

- a. TopTenReviews - <http://survey-software-review.toptenreviews.com/>(link is external)
- b. Relevant Insights - <http://www.relevantinsights.com/free-online-survey-tools>(link is external)
- c. SocialBrite - <http://www.socialbrite.org/2010/09/16/5-top-online-survey-tools-for-nonprofits/>(link is external)

References:

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2. Church AH. Estimating the effect of incentives on mail survey response rates: A meta-analysis. *Public Opin Q.* 1993; 57: 62-79
3. Phillips, A. W., Friedman, B. T., Utrankar, A., Ta, A. Q., Reddy, S. T., & Durning, S. J. (2017). Surveys of Health Professions Trainees. *Academic Medicine*, 92(2), 222-228. doi:10.1097/acm.0000000000001334
4. Retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://education.temple.edu/help/survey-tools-dissertations-and-research>