A CRASH COURSE

IN DEVELOPING SURVEY QUESTIONS

Lyssa Wilson Becho & Lori Wingate

Michigan Association for Evaluation Conference | 2019

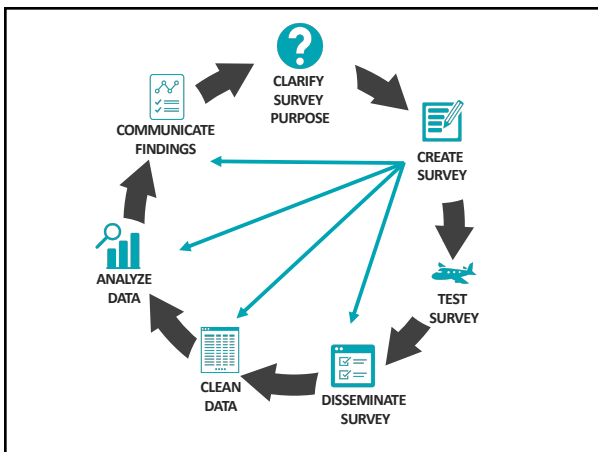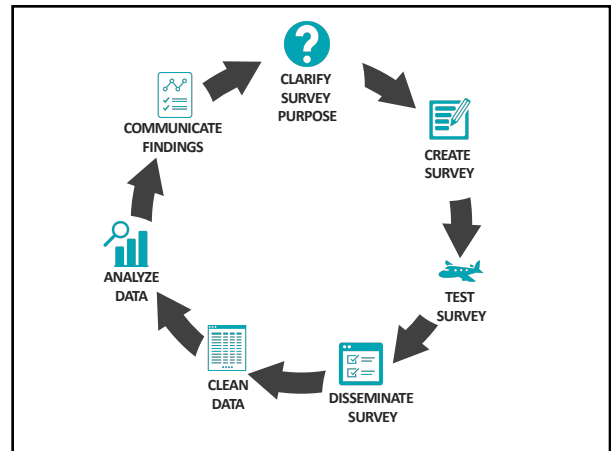WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY **The Evaluation Center**

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www.wmich.edu/evaluation

www.evalu-ate.org

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SURVEY PROCESS

CLARIFY SURVEY PURPOSE
CREATE SURVEY
TEST SURVEY
DISSEMINATE SURVEY
CLEAN DATA
ANALYZE DATA
COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

CLARIFY SURVEY PURPOSE
CREATE SURVEY
TEST SURVEY
DISSEMINATE SURVEY
CLEAN DATA
ANALYZE DATA
COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

"There are no right answers to wrong questions."

- Ursula K. LeGuin
The Language of the Night

BASIC PRINCIPLES

OF GOOD SURVEY QUESTIONS

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

1. How important do you think it is to use IRT to validate survey instruments?
   - Not at all important
   - Somewhat important
   - Very important

PRINCIPLE 1

Language is simple and direct; questions are free from jargon, acronyms, and ambiguous terms.

---

1. How important do you think it is to use IRT to validate survey instruments?
   - Not at all important
   - Somewhat important
   - Very important

What does this mean?

PRINCIPLE 1
Language is simple and direct; questions are free from jargon, acronyms, and ambiguous terms.

---

1. How important do you think it is to use IRT to validate survey instruments?
   - Not at all important
   - Somewhat important
   - Very important

How important do you think it is to use **Item Response Theory** to validate survey instruments?

or

What methods do you currently use to validate survey instruments that you create?
[list different methods]

PRINCIPLE 1
Language is simple and direct; questions are free from jargon, acronyms, and ambiguous terms.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

2. How confident are you in your survey development and administration skills?
   - Not at all confident
   - Somewhat confident
   - Very confident

PRINCIPLE 2

Each question asks about only one thing at a time.

---

2 How confident are you in your survey development and administration skills?
- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Somewhat confident
- ○ Very confident

Survey development
≠
Survey administration

PRINCIPLE 2
Each question asks about only one thing at a time.

---

2 How confident are you in your survey development and administration skills?
- ○ Not at all confident
- ○ Somewhat confident
- ○ Very confident

1 How confident are you in your **survey development** skills?

2 How confident are you in your **survey administration** skills?

PRINCIPLE 2
Each question asks about only one thing at a time.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

3 It will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

PRINCIPLE 3

No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

---

3 It will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

"I disagree it will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation."

PRINCIPLE 3
No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

---

3 It will not be difficult to apply what I learned in this presentation.
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I will be able to apply what I learned in this presentation.
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

PRINCIPLE 3
No more than one negative term is used in a question, including its response options.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

4 Which of the following best describes you?
- ○ Internal evaluator
- ○ External evaluator

PRINCIPLE 4
Response options are exhaustive; all reasonable answers to a question are included, with an *other* option if needed.

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PRINCIPLE 4
Response options are exhaustive; all reasonable answers to a question are included, with an *other* option if needed.

4 Which of the following best describes you?
- ○ Internal evaluator
- ○ External evaluator

Which of the following best describes you?
- ○ Internal evaluator
- ○ External evaluator
- ○ **Evaluation manager**
- ○ **Evaluation commissioner**
- ○ **Other** _____

PRINCIPLE 4
Response options are exhaustive; all reasonable answers to a question are included, with an *other* option if needed.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

5 In the past 12 months, how many conferences have you attended that had an evaluation focus?
- ○ 0 - 1
- ○ 1 - 2
- ○ 2 - 3
- ○ 3 - 4
- ○ 4 or more

Handout and more resources:
www.evalu-ate.org/webinars/feb-19/

PRINCIPLE 5

Response options are mutually exclusive; possible answers do not overlap.

---

5 In the past 12 months, how many conferences have you attended that had an evaluation focus?

- ○ 0 - 1
- ○ 1 - 2
- ○ 2 - 3
- ○ 3 - 4
- ○ 4 or more

PRINCIPLE 5
Response options are mutually exclusive; i.e., possible answers do not overlap.

---

5 In the past 12 months, how many conferences have you attended that had an evaluation focus?

○ 0 - 1	○ 0 - 1
○ 1 - 2	○ **2** - 3
○ 2 - 3	○ **3** - 4
○ 3 - 4	○ **5** or more
○ 4 or more	

PRINCIPLE 5
Response options are mutually exclusive; i.e., possible answers do not overlap.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

6

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Evaluators should be trained in survey development.	○	○	○	○	○
I am very knowledgeable about survey development.	○	○	○	○	○
I have received training about survey development.	○	○	○	○	○

PRINCIPLE 6

Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

6

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Evaluators should be trained in survey development.						**Agreement scales work well with opinion questions.**
I am very knowledgeable about survey development.						**Adverbs in question stem confound agreement scale**
I have received training about survey development.						**Action – *yes/no* or *frequency***

PRINCIPLE 6
Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

6

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Evaluators should be trained in survey development	○	○	○	○	○
I am knowledgeable about survey development.	○	○	○	○	○

Have you completed a training session on survey development in the past 12 months? ○ Yes ○ No

PRINCIPLE 6
Response options match question stem; all possible answers make sense with prompt.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

7 What is your opinion of the overall quality of this presentation?

- ○ Met my expectations
- ○ Good
- ○ Very good
- ○ Exceeded my expectations

PRINCIPLE 7

Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

---

7 What is your opinion of the overall quality of this presentation?

- ○ Met my expectations
- ○ Good
- ○ Very good
- ○ Exceeded my expectations

PRINCIPLE 7
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

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7 What is your opinion of the overall quality of this presentation?

- ○ Met my expectations
- ○ Good
- ○ Very good
- ○ Exceeded my expectations

- ○ **Very poor**
- ○ **Poor**
- ○ **Acceptable**
- ○ **Good**
- ○ **Very good**

PRINCIPLE 7
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

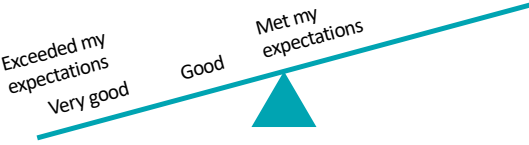Handout and more resources:
www.evalu-ate.org/webinars/feb-19/

Very good   Good   Acceptable   Poor   Very poor

PRINCIPLE 7
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

Exceeded my expectations   Met my expectations
Very good   Good

PRINCIPLE 7
Terms used in a response scale are consistent and balanced; they represent either a continuum of the same concept (unipolar) or of opposite concepts (bipolar).

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

8   In the past 12 months, what types of training on surveys development have you attended?

- Academic course
- In-person workshop
- Online workshop or webinar
- Other _____
- Not applicable/did not attend other training
- Don't know

PRINCIPLE 8
Don't know and *not applicable* are included only when they are reasonable responses.

---

8   In the past 12 months, what types of training on surveys development have you attended?

- Academic course
- In-person workshop
- Online workshop or webinar
- Other _____
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Don't know and *not applicable* are included only when they are reasonable responses.

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- Online workshop or webinar
- Other _____
- Not applicable/did not attend other training
- Don't know

PRINCIPLE 8
Don't know and *not applicable* are included only when they are reasonable responses.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

9a How do members of your local community feel about completing surveys?
- ○ Very negative
- ○ Somewhat negative
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat positive
- ○ Very positive

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

9b What do you think are the most important considerations when it comes to multi-modal surveys?

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

9c How many surveys have you developed throughout your career?

_____ surveys

PRINCIPLE 9
Questions can be readily answered by respondents.

9a How do members of your local community feel about completing surveys? → **Requires sizable inference**

9b What do you think are the most important considerations when it comes to multi-modal surveys? → **Substantial cognitive burden**

9c How many surveys have you developed throughout your career? → **Recall and estimation challenge**

PRINCIPLE 9
Questions can be readily answered by respondents.

What problem(s) do you see in this question?

10 How long have you been an evaluator?
- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1-5 years
- ○ 6-10 years
- ○ 11-15 years
- ○ 16 or more years

PRINCIPLE 10

All questions are appropriate for all respondents; branching is used when one or more questions are pertinent to only certain types of respondents.

Are you an evaluator?
10
○ No
○ Yes
→ How long have you been an evaluator?

○ Less than 1 year
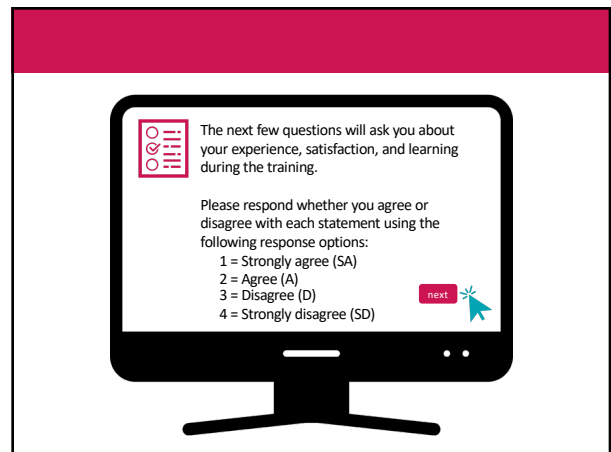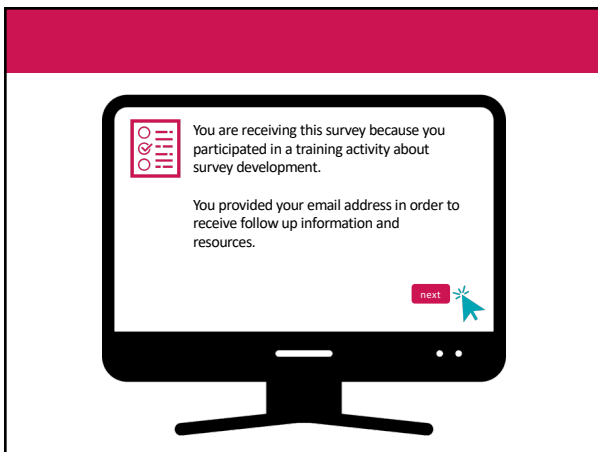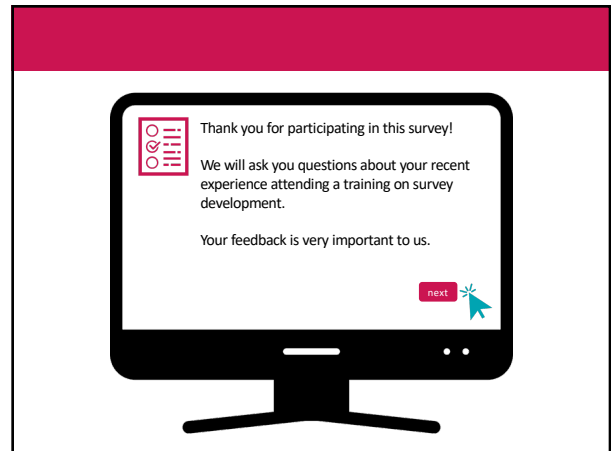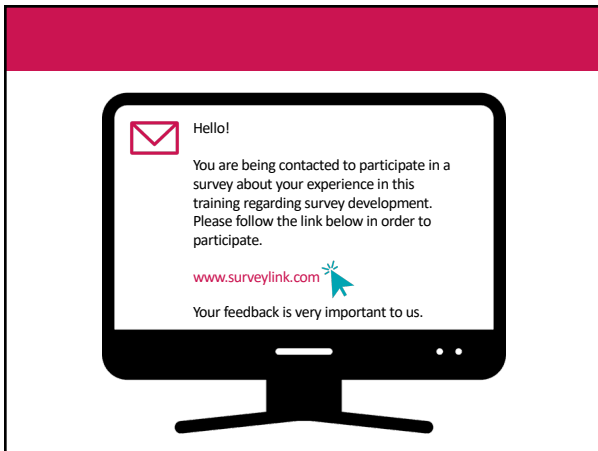○ 1-5 years
○ 6-10 years
○ 11-15 years
○ 16 or more years

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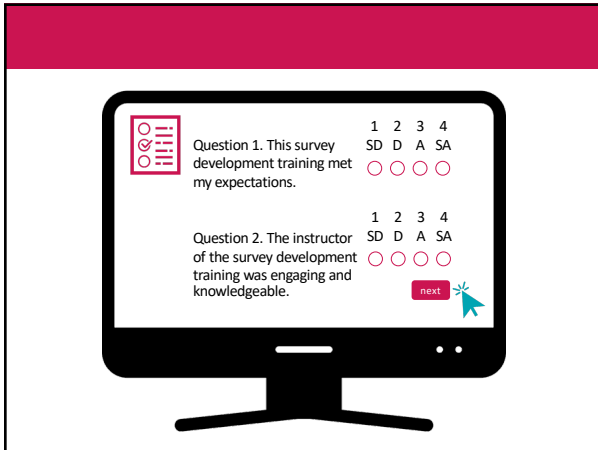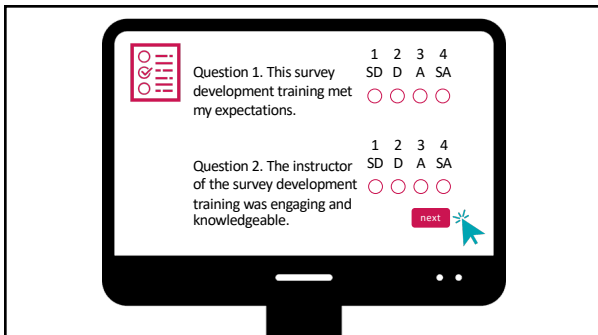

Hello!

You are being contacted to participate in a survey about your experience in this training regarding survey development. Please follow the link below in order to participate.

www.surveylink.com

Your feedback is very important to us.

Thank you for participating in this survey!

We will ask you questions about your recent experience attending a training on survey development.

Your feedback is very important to us.

next

You are receiving this survey because you participated in a training activity about survey development.

You provided your email address in order to receive follow up information and resources.

next

The next few questions will ask you about your experience, satisfaction, and learning during the training.

Please respond whether you agree or disagree with each statement using the following response options:
1 = Strongly agree (SA)
2 = Agree (A)
3 = Disagree (D)
4 = Strongly disagree (SD)

next

Slide 1:

| 1 2 3 4 |
| SD D A SA |

Question 1. This survey development training met my expectations.
○ ○ ○ ○

Question 2. The instructor of the survey development training was engaging and knowledgeable.
○ ○ ○ ○

next

Slide 2:

PRINCIPLE 11

Entire questionnaire is as concise as possible; extraneous or duplicate information is omitted from questions, instructions, and communications.

Slide 3:

Question 1. This survey development training met my expectations.
1 2 3 4
SD D A SA
○ ○ ○ ○

Question 2. The instructor of the survey development training was engaging and knowledgeable.
1 2 3 4
SD D A SA
○ ○ ○ ○

next

PRINCIPLE 11
Entire questionnaire is as concise as possible; extraneous or duplicate information is omitted from questions, instructions, and communications.

Slide 4:

1. This training met my expectations.

Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree
○ ○ ○ ○

2. The instructor was engaging and knowledgeable.
○ ○ ○ ○

next

PRINCIPLE 11
Entire questionnaire is as concise as possible; extraneous or duplicate information is omitted from questions, instructions, and communications.

Slide 5:

12 What is your racial/ethnic identity?
○ African American / Black
○ Asian
○ Hispanic
○ Pacific Islander / Alaska Native
○ Multiracial
○ White
○ Prefer to self-identify: _____

What is your gender identity?
○ Female
○ Male
○ Prefer to self-identify: _____

Slide 6:

12 What is your racial/ethnic identity?
○ African American / Black
○ Asian
○ Hispanic
○ Pacific Islander / Alaska Native
○ Multiracial
○ White
○ Prefer to self-identify: _____

Am I planning to analyze survey results by racial or gender categories?

What is your gender identity?
○ Female
○ Male
○ Prefer to self-identify: _____

Handout and more resources:
www.evalu-ate.org/webinars/feb-19/

PRINCIPLE 12

All questions support the survey's purpose, which is aligned with a larger research or evaluation question.
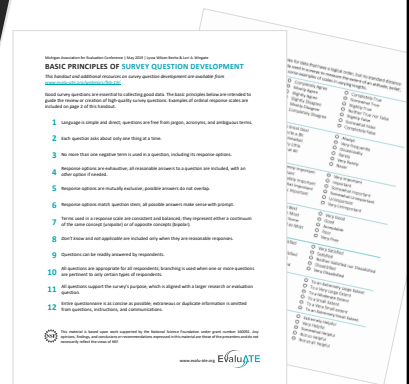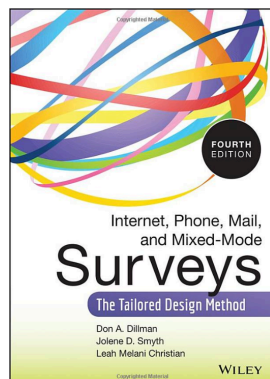

SURVEY PRESTING

SURVEY PRETESTING

Ways to pretest your survey:

- Checklists and assessment tools
- Expert review
- Think-aloud
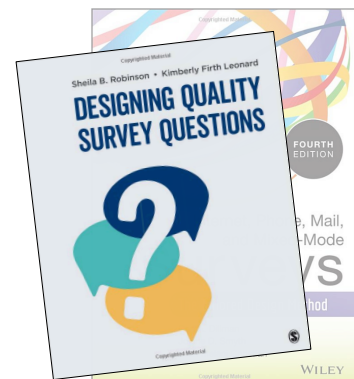- Focus group
- Pilot testing

PRESENTATION HANDOUT

OTHER RESOURCES

Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014)

OTHER RESOURCES

Designing Quality Survey Questions by Robinson & Leonard (2018)

QUESTIONS

More resources at:
evalu-ate.org/webinars/feb-19/

See more from EvaluATE at:
www.evalu-ate.org