

Web Survey Standards

Survey Solutions “Web Options” Settings

Formatting

✓ “Show Survey Title” > type in title as it is to appear on survey

Response Collection

Easy: Use Perseus Server (default)

“Email a copy of each response to:” > enter email of person collecting responses

Submission Page

Select “Redirect to existing web page” > enter as follows

For distribution: <http://is123.ce.psu.edu/OMR/thanks.html>

For on-site evaluations: URL of custom Thank you/Reset Survey Page

Set background to floral white (#FFF9EE)

Why?

Because off white is easiest to read and using a BGCOLOR decreases download time. (Lyons, 2001)

Don't

- Use bright colors
 - Use graphic (.jpg/.gif) backgrounds – significant increase in download time
-

Header Formatting

- Insert graphic in top left corner (use <DIV> tags) use HTML fragments if possible. ALWAYS include “height, width, and alt” to optimize downloading
- Use <H1> or <H2> for title (depending on length)
- Follow title with <HR>
- Center title and <HR>

Why use tag properties?

If you identify the height and width the downloading page will display a box and download the text before completely downloading the graphic. User is less likely to abort. The “alt” tag content will be displayed in image location box until image downloads, or in place of image if link is broken. Therefore, use a short but descriptive “alt” tag (e.g., for the PSU logo use “PSU” or “PSU Shield”. Especially important when graphic is also functioning as a link.

Number questions

Why?

To preserve the familiar format used in paper surveys.

Bold Questions

Why?

Help questions to stand out. Makes it easier to determine where next question begins. Suggested that excessive “white space” between questions is not preferred on web surveys – keep it condensed (appears shorter, less to scroll through). (Dillman, 2000)

Format to match paper survey (as closely as possible)

Why?

Same as reason for including question numbers. Additionally if survey is also being distributed in paper you want to make sure all respondents are responding to the same questions, with the same responses, in the same order, etc. (Dillman, 2000)

Editing Text Size

If it is necessary to edit text size ALWAYS use relative size (e.g.,) NOT absolute (e.g.,)

Why?

Accessibility: individuals with visual impairments (or generally poor eyesight) can set the default of their browsers to increase the size of text so they can read it. If you use relative it will preserve the original intent...if you specify a font size the browser cannot override it and the person may not be able to read it.

Table Formatting (Scales)

Column Width

Make sure that response column widths are equal so that response options are equidistant (i.e., dissatisfied isn't wider than satisfied making the distance between radio buttons vary). Always set column widths by specifying percentages, not pixels. (e.g, question =50% width of table, each response =10%)

Why?

Point should be equidistant if you intent your responses to represent quantitative degree type responses (e.g., very satisfied, satisfied, unsure, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied) if your categories are qualitatively different (e.g., yes, no) then it's not an important issue.

Using percentages to set widths b/c it will allow the size of the table to reset relative to the screen resolution and browser window size. The key issue is that the table width should be completely in view to avoid horizontal scrolling.

Use of Color

If table represents one question/scale ONLY use color horizontally to help the respondent line up questions with response options. If the survey is long, insert the response options into the table several times so they will always be visible on the screen.

If the table includes one stem but 2+ responses (two separate questions requiring answers) then it is recommended to use color vertically to differentiate the response categories (e.g., what was the quality of this program, what was the need for this program). Remember, 8-10% of the population has some form of colorblindness, use care in choosing your contrasting colors.

If using an international sample, pay specific attention to the connotations of the color in the cultures being surveyed (see Appendix).

Why?

Using color horizontally within a scale can suggest qualitative differences between options. If for some reason you must do it, make sure you use the same hue and increase saturation at a constant rate (i.e., 10%, 20%, etc.) (Dillman, 2000)

Borders

Set borders to 1

Why?

Helps respondent line up responses with questions, neat visual appearance.

“Survey Reset” Button

After the Submit button insert one space and the following:

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<INPUT type="reset" value="Reset Survey">
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Why?

This allows the user to clear the survey, which is the only way to reset radio buttons and can be useful for onsite surveys where the previous respondents' answers have been retained by the form. Another option to clear surveys is to simultaneously hold down “shift” and hit “reload/refresh”. It is unwise to anticipate your sample will have this knowledge.

Technical Support Statement

After the </form> tag replace the Survey Solutions mini-ad with the following:

```
<P>Please report technical difficulties to Roger Garthwaite at <A  
HREF="mailto:rag5@outreach.psu.edu">rag5@outreach.psu.edu</a> or (814)865-  
7600.</p>
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Why?

So the respondent has someone to call if the survey isn't working properly. At this point the problem is likely to be the submit button isn't working...b/c the server hosting the CGI or Perl script is temporarily down or unavailable due to high traffic. Not much Roger can do, but we need to be aware and it adds a level of customer service for frustrated respondents.

Snail Mail Option

Below Submit Button include instructions/address for mailing a printed copy of the survey. Example,

To submit survey in hard copy please print and mail to: Contact person, 403 Moore Building, University Park, PA 16802

Why?

People may choose to mail in a survey due to technical difficulties with submission (see above) or anonymity concerns.

Embed Pop-up Responding Instructions

Requires JavaScript...currently under development

Why?

Added level of assistance to help respondents with limited technical knowledge/experience, while not being cumbersome on the tech savvy.

Test

Test survey submission and formatting on Mac & PC from IE, Netscape Communicator, and N6. Be sure to read emails into Survey Solutions database to detect any errors.

Why?

Check to make sure there are no errors in the survey – either due to errors in the .que file or from formatting (especially if an editor was used).

Also, although browser standards are more similar today than ever before, they still have their quirks and you don't want the survey to look bizarre to some respondents. Browser versions/defaults vary between platforms also.

Appendix

Colors Associated with Various Cultures

Culture	Red	Blue	Green	Yellow	White
U.S.	Danger	Masculinity	Safety	Cowardice	Purity
France	Aristocracy	Freedom Peace	Criminality	Temporary	Neutrality
Egypt	Death	Virtue Faith Truth	Fertility Strength	Happiness Prosperity	Joy
India	Life Creativity	--	Prosperity Fertility	Success	Death Purity
Japan	Anger Danger	Villainy	Future Youth Energy	Grace Nobility	Death
China	Happiness	Heaven Clouds	Ming Dynasty Heavens Clouds	Birth Wealth Power	Death Purity