Good survey questions are essential to collecting good data. The basic principles below are intended to guide the review or creation of high-quality survey questions. Examples of ordinal response scales are included on page 2 of this handout.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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).

8. Don’t know and not applicable are included only when they are reasonable responses.

9. Questions can be readily answered by respondents.

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

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

12. Entire questionnaire is as concise as possible; extraneous or duplicate information is omitted from questions, instructions, and communications.
Ordinal scales – measurement scales for data that have a logical order, but no standard distance between categories – are frequently used in surveys to measure the extent of an attitude, belief, knowledge, or behavior. Below are some examples of scales in varying lengths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Highly Important</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>To a Large Extent</td>
<td>Very Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Very Often</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>To a Moderate Extent</td>
<td>Somewhat Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Slightly Important</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Somewhat Dissatisfied</td>
<td>To a Small Extent</td>
<td>Not Likely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Completely Agree
- Mostly Agree
- Slightly Agree
- Slightly Disagree
- Mostly Disagree
- Completely Disagree
- A Great Deal
- Quite a Bit
- Somewhat
- Very Little
- Not at All
- Always
- Very Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Very Rarely
- Never
- Extremely Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Very Important
- One of the Best
- Better than Most
- Better than Some
- Not as Good as Most
- Very Good
- Good
- Acceptable
- Poor
- Very Poor
- Extremely Satisfied
- Very Satisfied
- Moderately Satisfied
- Slightly Satisfied
- Not at all Satisfied
- Significantly
- Moderately
- Slightly
- Not at all
- To an Extremely Large Extent
- To a Very Large Extent
- To a Moderate Extent
- To a Small Extent
- To a Very Small extent
- To an Extremely Small Extent
- Far Exceeds
- Exceeds
- Meets
- Meets Some
- Does not Meet
- Extremely Helpful
- Very Helpful
- Somewhat Helpful
- Not so Helpful
- Not at all Helpful