

# Survey, Questionnaire, or Opinion Poll

## Description

Surveys, questionnaires, and opinion polls are tools used to collect data on a given subject. They allow us to learn about the feelings, beliefs, and attitudes of a smaller sample of the desired population and then, with a measure of care and luck, generalize our findings to a larger population. Keep in mind that the design of the survey, questionnaire, or opinion poll and the way questions are asked or statements are made can significantly influence the validity of the findings. Data, poorly gathered, can be misleading.

*Surveys* usually have a series of statements requiring the respondents to choose from a rating scale that has such response options as *strongly agree*, *agree*, *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, or *undecided*.

*Questionnaires* are more likely to have a series of questions that require the respondent to give a more detailed answer with some explanation that supports it.

*Opinion polls* are mostly conducted by telephone and usually focus on a single question or issue and require a simple response such as *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*.

## Planning

1. Decide on a topic or subject that would lend itself to your actively getting input from peers, parents, community members, school personnel, etc. Then decide whether this information would best be compiled through a survey, questionnaire, or opinion poll. To help make this decision, ask yourself the following questions:
  - a. Do I want to develop the topic and give the respondents a set of optional, but limited, response choices?
  - b. Do I want to develop a set of questions about the topic and give the respondents more time and flexibility in answering the questions, allowing space for explanations?
  - c. Do I want to develop a single question or a question with several related parts that limit the respondents to an either/or type of answer?
2. Once you have decided on a topic and a format for participant responses on the topic, you are ready to design the data-gathering survey. Some things to keep in mind for this purpose are:
  - a. Define the target population or group you want to learn from.

- b. Make a sampling plan to generate a randomly selected subset of the general population (how many, age, gender, etc., will give you data that you can make generalizations about).
  - c. Design a survey, questionnaire, or opinion poll that will give you as many responses as possible while keeping confusion to a minimum.
  - d. Think of some ways to get as many responses as possible. Techniques that help include putting prepaid postage on survey forms mailed out and calling at convenient times for telephone polls, keeping surveys brief and easy to use, and including a personal letter or explanation stressing the importance of the study. Rewards for completing the survey or talking on the telephone can be used as a ploy to get cooperation from potential respondents.
  - e. Notice any events that happened around the time of the survey that may have introduced bias or prejudice in responses.
3. Field test your survey, questionnaire, or opinion poll with a few individuals for practice and input on the quality of the data-gathering tool you created. Make revisions as needed.
4. Conduct your survey, questionnaire, or opinion pool and then compile the results using some type of tally sheet or recording system. Visually represent your results with charts and graphs. Draw conclusions from the data and share these with the respondents in some way.

## **Assessing**

1. Study and analyze your results to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your survey, questionnaire, or opinion poll. Identify things you would do better or differently next time.
2. Analyze the process used in collecting the data. What factors led to the success of your project, and what factors seemed to interfere with it?
3. Compose a list of dos and don'ts for conducting a study using surveys, questionnaires, and/or opinion polls that others might find useful in the future.

## **Technology Connection**

1. Put your questionnaire on SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang, Zoho Polls, FreeOnlineSurveys, or Poll Daddy. View the results and analyze them for patterns to include in your assessment.
2. If your class has a blog or wiki, use it for your survey, poll, or questionnaire.