Tips for Writing Good Survey Questions

You may refer to our Question Library for suggestions. There are more than 300 sample questions covering topics like inclusion, open educational resources, classroom activities, and gathering midterm feedback.

Here are some suggestions when writing your own questions:

Do:

• Use simple, direct language
• Put easy questions first but be aware of the flow of the questions
• Ask one thing per question - Avoid the use of the word “and”
• Ask questions that you need to know the answers to not just that you would like to know
• Keep answers mutually exclusive if it is a single choice question
  o Make sure that only one of the answers could apply and not multiple selections
• Give all possible answers
  o Make sure that there is a response choice for possible answer
  o May have to have an “other” option
• Try and keep your scales consistent
  o Changing types of scales and wording on surveys can be confusing and some respondents may not be aware of the change and thus answer erroneously
  o Good idea to emphasis the scale and the direction of it in the instructions
• Keep the survey short
  o Survey fatigue can be a real issue
  o Good idea to let students know how many questions the survey has and/or the amount of time anticipated to complete it

Avoid:

• Asking questions that would reveal the identity of the student. Questions about program enrollment or expected grade are acceptable but be wary of how class size can affect student anonymity.
• Asking questions that are leading, emotional, or use evocative language
• Asking questions if nothing can be done based on respondent’s answer
  o Do not ask students if they would like to have or do something if it is an impossibility or something that you would not do
  o Do not give false hope

Resources:
https://psr.iq.harvard.edu/files/psr/files/PSRQuestionnaireTipSheet_0.pdf
https://www.rider.edu/offices-services/teaching-and-learning-center/resources/course-evaluation