

What is a questionnaire?

The questionnaire may be regarded as a form of an interview on paper and follows a pattern similar to that of the interview schedule.

However, because a questionnaire is impersonal and there is no interviewer to explain ambiguities it must be especially clear.

The essentials of Construction:

- An inappropriate questionnaire misleads the research.
- Therefore, a set of adequate and appropriate questions is required.

The Format

Size:

- It should not be more than two or three pages. The shorter the better!
- Questions should be short but say enough to be specific.

Appearance:

It should have an attractive layout.

Clarity:

- The questions should be short and clear in terms and expression. Use definitions of concepts that may be ambiguous.
- Keep language simple but tailor it accordingly to whether you question students or grandparents

Communicability :

The questions should be able to keep the interest of the respondents.

Question Types

The questions asked can take two forms:

Closed-ended: questions that ask the respondent to make choices - Yes or No, check items on a list, or select from multiple choice answers.

Open-ended: Questions that allow respondents to share feelings and opinions that are important to them.

- If the objective is to compile data from all respondents, then sticking with restricted questions that are easily quantified is better.
- If degrees of emotions or depth of sentiment are to be studied, then develop a scale to quantify those feelings.

Characteristics of Good Questions in a Questionnaire

- Clear objective
- Simple language
- Clear concepts
- Without bias
- Adequate answer options
- Shorter questions
- The single question at a time
- Affirmative sentences
- Mathematics not imposed
- Short/clear reference periods
- Avoid question reference

Avoid:

- questions with complex language and ambiguous concepts
- questions with calculations
- two in one questions i.e. asking more than one thing in the same question
- embarrassing and threatening questions that may offend the respondents
- leading wording that guides the respondent to an answer

Do not forget to explain what the research is about, how you will use the answers and how long it will take to complete.

Do a test drive!