

How to write a questionnaire or survey

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10 top tips

There's no better way to design a service than by starting with some research and consultation with your users or potential users. But how can you make the process work well for you?

- 1. Decide exactly what you're aiming to achieve** – be specific, for example is it to get feedback on a new project or to find out why less people are using your services?
- 2. Be prepared** – is your mailing list up-to-date? Have you set a budget for postage, photocopying and admin time? Compare costs for using stamped, freepost or pre-printed return envelopes – or could you use email?
- 3. What do you already know?** – if you have sent out a questionnaire before, using some of the same questions may allow you to compare results. If you collect information from your users in other ways, make sure this is taken into account when you design your questionnaire.
- 4. Make it look good** – clear type in a font of size 12 or above is essential. Get the best photocopies/ printed versions you can afford. You may not be able to afford to use colour this year but why not budget for it in future?
- 5. Try it out** - ask colleagues or even better a small group of the people you're aiming to reach, to try out a draft version. Look at the responses you get back – did you get the information you wanted? If any of the questions were misunderstood or your group says they found it too long, now is the time to make some changes.
- 6. Set a deadline for returns** – this helps you plan when you'll collate the responses and encourages people to reply promptly.
- 7. Include a covering letter** – explain why you're asking questions and what will be done with the information gathered and when. Have your group leader or Chair approve and sign the letter – people are more likely to take notice.
- 8. Offer other ways to respond** – depending on your group, you may want to consider offering to take responses by email, telephone, in person or at meetings and events.
- 9. Publish the results** – if people have been interested enough to fill in pages of questions and take the time to post the questionnaire back to you, they will probably want to know what everyone else said. A summary of results could be published in your newsletter, on your website or a short letter.
- 10. Take action and tell people that they made a difference** – encourage people to get involved in future by explaining what you did as a result of the questionnaire.

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