



accidents don't have to happen

# Survey Question Writing



# Question Writing Basics

- Keep questions short
- Avoid asking two questions in one  
*e.g. 'How enjoyable and informative did you find this workshop?'*
- Be sure everyone will understand the question in the same way (unambiguous)
- Pre-test questions

Question  
writing  
tips!

# Question Writing Basics

- **Avoid jargon and abbreviations e.g. 'ADI' or 'serious injury'**
- **Avoid leading questions.**  
*e.g. 'Do you agree this workshop was enjoyable?' as opposed to: 'Please rate how enjoyable you found this workshop.'*
- **Avoid using two negatives in one question**  
*e.g. How much do you agree with the following statement: 'I would never not wear a seatbelt'*
- **Avoid surplus questions. Do you really need to ask it? How is it different to your other questions? How will you use the data?**
- **Ethics of wasting people's time**

# Question Writing Basics

- Be specific about what you are asking:



**‘Please rate this course on a scale of 1-5, with 1 meaning poor and 5 meaning excellent’**



**‘Please rate the following aspects of this course on a scale of 1-5 with 1 meaning poor and 5 meaning excellent (Opportunity to ask questions, Knowledge of Presenters, Use of examples...)’**

# Closed-Ended Questions



- **Structured into a list of possible responses predetermined by the researcher- forced choice**
- **Includes attitudinal statements (agree/disagree) and rating scales (excellent/poor)**
- **Should include an ‘other’ category to reduce bias from limited response options**

# Advantages of Closed-Ended Questions

- Quick for respondents to complete- better response rate
- Quick to analyse
- Can be analysed statistically
- Allows for easy comparisons between respondents (compares like with like)

# Weaknesses of Closed-Ended Questions

- Respondents have to choose from researcher's list of response options
- Respondents may think/do/feel in unanticipated ways!  
Importance of an 'other' option
- May be easy to respond to- may tick/circle without really thinking
- Only superficial responses gained- lacks explanation for accurate interpretation



# Open-Ended Questions

- Respondents answer in their own words
- Start with: 'who, what, where, when, how, why'
- Researcher categorises responses after data collected
- Use sparingly in questionnaire surveys and leave open-ended questions to the end



# Advantages of Open-Ended Questions

- Respondents able to elaborate
- Suitable for research on complex issues
- Useful where the interviewer lacks knowledge on the subject matter
- Can help to identify questions for further quantitative (closed-ended) surveys on the same topic



# Disadvantages of Open-Ended Questions

- Responses can be very varied and hard to categorise and compare
- Respondents required to give more thought and time to their answers
- Answers may still therefore be superficial

## Further information

- For more support writing your questions for your survey, view our [‘Surveys and Question Writing’ webcast](#)
- You can also download existing questions and examples of rating scales from our online [question bank](#)