

Module 3. Surveys

In this module, we review the skills and steps involved in designing surveys. Surveys are an excellent tool for gathering highly specific feedback on elements of your school design. You might be interested in knowing whether the topics you envision covering in advisory class align to students' perceptions of the most pressing issues in their day-to-day lives. In such instances, where your research questions are focused and you have clear hypotheses about how respondents will answer those questions, surveys allow you to gather feedback from many more respondents than is typically feasible through interviews or focus groups. Larger samples provide an opportunity to gain a more substantive understanding of the issue of interest, as well as investigate sub-group differences.

As described in Module #2, Focus Groups and Interviews, it oftentimes is advisable to conduct focus groups and/or interviews to arrive at a focused set of questions to explore through surveys. This process of exploratory research to yield more targeted and refined questions aligns with Carnegie's commitment to ongoing review and revision of the school model. Our subsequent guides, Module #4, Qualitative Data Analysis, and Module #5, Quantitative Data Analysis, review the steps involved in analyzing both the qualitative and quantitative data generated by surveys.

The example we use in this section is grounded in the Carnegie design principle of positive youth development. We focus specifically on a research question centered on caring, consistent student-adult relationships that communicate high expectations for student learning and behavior. The sequence of sections in this module appears below:

1. Determine whether a survey is the right research tool at this stage
2. Develop questions
3. Develop responses
4. Order questions and consider sub-groups
5. Revise using survey checklist
6. Field test
7. Prepare for administration

1. Determine Whether A Survey Is The Right Research Tool At This Stage

Key Information

Do you know what responses to your questions will likely be, and how they will vary? Surveys are a great research tool when you have a clear sense of your research question and hypotheses. Surveys utilize “forced choice” or “closed-ended” items: the researcher chooses the answers available to the respondents.

Forced-choice or closed-ended items: Survey questions for which the researcher chooses the answers available to respondents

As such, if you are unsure of what the likely or common responses to your questions will be, or how responses are likely to vary across sub-groups, you need to conduct some preliminary research. If you are still in this exploratory phase—refining your research question and developing hypotheses—it is advisable to first conduct focus groups and interviews. Refer to Module #2, Focus Groups and Interviews, for more on this topic.

Once you have arrived at a focused set of research questions and hypotheses, including a clear sense of how you expect responses to survey questions to vary across sub-groups, you are ready to develop survey items that will help you answer your research questions. This level of focus ensures you are able to interpret responses to survey items in the context of your research questions, and that you ask only for the information you need most.

Application to Example

The Lucretia Mott design team is exploring how caring and consistent relationships with adults—a critical component of positive youth development—should be integrated into their new school. Through focus groups, they discovered that participating students said they especially valued having a counselor of the same gender. The team conducted follow-up interviews to investigate whether other students felt this way, and to see if they had similar insights into the characteristics of positive adult relationships.

At this point, the team has identified specific questions arising from their preliminary research. They want to know whether their initial insights into what students value about adult relationships holds true with the larger population of students who could attend Lucretia Mott, including whether students value having a counselor of the same gender. They also want to know about the characteristics of positive relationships with adults. Finally, they want to investigate a distinct, but related, question: whether the relationships students perceive as positive actually benefit students.

The design team has thus arrived at a focused set of research questions about the group of students who could possibly attend their new school:

- What are the characteristics of positive student relationships with adults? Do our insights about what students value about adult relationships hold with a larger sample?
- Does having a counselor of the same gender have a positive impact on the student’s relationship with the adult?
- Do students believe that positive adult relationships are beneficial to their learning?

By developing this focused set of research questions, the design team has prepared itself to begin designing a

survey.

2. Develop Questions

Key Information

Design questions that are easy to answer and easy to analyze. Now that you know the components of your research question, you will design survey questions. This process hinges on two key principles of survey design:

- Make it easy to respond honestly to your survey. Every item in your survey should be designed to ensure that your respondents are able to understand the question and respond to it accurately and honestly. Survey data and analytics are only as good as their underlying questions!
- Make your survey easy to analyze. Once respondents have furnished their answers, we want to be able to easily and efficiently interpret the resulting data to answer our research questions.

In the example presented below, we present four guidelines for writing survey questions that are both easy to analyze and easy to answer honestly:

- 1) Ask about one thing at a time: Make sure survey items pose a single question. An easy mistake to make when writing survey items is asking multiple questions at once, also called a double-barreled question. These questions can confuse respondents and render data analysis difficult.
- 2) Use language that makes sense to your audience: Simple, parsimonious language—including vocabulary understandable to your respondents—will ensure you are gathering the most accurate information possible.
- 3) Consider how you are asking sensitive questions: If your survey includes questions that relate to controversial or sensitive topics, modify the language so they ask not about the respondent directly, but rather about how others think or behave. As you look for sensitive questions, consider whether respondents will believe your claims of anonymity, and whether you are asking them to “lose face” in some way.
- 4) Do not reveal what you expect to hear: Ensure you are not hinting to respondents what you expect to hear with biased language (i.e., “Do you agree that...?”). Write balanced questions that present both potential sides of an opinion (i.e., “Do you agree or disagree that...?”)

Application to Example

The survey created by the Lucretia Mott design team relates to students’ relationships with adults at school. As we develop our questions, we want to ensure that we:

Ask about one thing at a time. The team wants to know whether a student would enjoy interacting with people from their own neighborhood; of their own race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation; or who have the same job the student hopes to have when they are older.

<p>DON'T try to fit all of these questions into a single question:</p>	<p>DO break out questions with multiple components into multiple questions:</p>
<p>How interested would you be in being paired in a mentoring relationship with someone who is the same gender as you; from your neighborhood; shares your own race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, or has a job you would like to have?</p>	<p>How interested would you be in being paired in a mentoring relationship with...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An adult who is the same gender as me ➤ An adult who is from my neighborhood ➤ An adult who is the same race/ethnicity as me ➤ An adult who has the same sexual orientation as me ➤ An adult who has a job I would like to have <p>Each bullet point would be paired with its own set of responses—developing response sets is explored further in the following section.</p>

The question on the left is long and confusing! In addition, if the design team attempts to analyze its results, they will be left uncertain about what kind of mentoring relationship students would prefer. The set of questions on the right, in turn, asks one question at a time, making the survey items clearer to the respondent and easier to analyze for the design team.

Consider your audience!

Remember that we are asking questions of people with unique sets of experiences and knowledge, different from our own.

Use language that makes sense to your audience. Recall that that the design team is asking questions of people with unique sets of experiences and knowledge, different from their own. Write questions using simple, parsimonious language that will be understood by respondents:

<p>A NOT-SO-GREAT QUESTION FOR ADOLESCENTS uses unnatural language and unnecessary words:</p>	<p>A BETTER QUESTION FOR ADOLESCENTS asks a question using straightforward, teen-friendly language:</p>
<p>How much do you value discussing your academic performance with adults at your school?</p>	<p>How much do you like speaking with teachers about how you are doing in school?</p>

Consider how you are asking sensitive questions. If the design team asks questions about sensitive or controversial topics, they need to be careful about how they frame those questions. If they think students might have reason to answer dishonestly to “save face”—perhaps because a question asks them to incriminate themselves in some way—they need to create space for students to provide an honest response. They do this by writing questions that ask not about students’ thoughts or behavior, but rather about the thoughts or behavior of others:

DON'T ASK DIRECT QUESTIONS about sensitive topics:	DO ASK INDIRECT QUESTIONS about sensitive topics:
How often do you lie to adults at your school about why you are late?	How often do your classmates lie to adults at their school about why they are late?

Do not reveal what you expect to hear. Leading questions indicate to respondents that certain responses are better or more acceptable than others through biased language (i.e., “Do you agree that...?” or “How often do you...?”) The generally accepted practice is to balance attitudinal questions by using phrases like “agree or disagree,” “favor or oppose,” or “satisfied or dissatisfied.”

DON'T ASK QUESTIONS THAT IMPLY A CERTAIN REPOSENSE IS CORRECT through their framing:	DO ASK BALANCED QUESTIONS:
How often do you talk to your counselor about the college application process? implies students are surely discussing the college application process with their counselors at least a bit.	How often do students at your school talk to counselors about the college application process? depersonalizes the question, allowing students to answer honestly.
Do you agree that it is helpful to talk to teachers about your future? suggests that students ought to indicate this practice is helpful.	Talking to teachers about the future is...[Not at all helpful → Very helpful] presents a range of answer options without indicating which answer is preferred.

3. Develop Responses

Key Information

Carefully craft answer options. Surveys typically present a series of “forced-choice” items. Creating the response set for each survey item is therefore a critical step in survey development. This process helps ensure you are accurately capturing student voice—or the voices of the other stakeholders who comprise your group of interest.

Likert scale:

A scale of survey item responses that offers a range of options from one extreme to another, such as “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.”

Likert scales offer a range of response options. When developing sets of responses, bear in mind that answer options should each represent one possible response, and leave as little opportunity for interpretation as possible. Oftentimes, choices are offered on a “Likert scale,” which offers options from one extreme to another, such as “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.”

Likert scales offer more variance than “Yes/No” questions. When analyzing data, we want to have as much variance as possible: that is, we want respondents to have as many response options as appropriate for each question. As such, rather than offer a simple “yes” and “no” (or “agree” and “disagree”), present more options. This variance allows the researcher to distinguish between people with strong and “soft” viewpoints.

Stay away from “Choose all that apply”

In lieu of a “Choose all that apply” survey item, ask respondents a series of Likert-scale questions to rank their preferences among the options.

Likert scales offer more variance than “Choose all that apply” questions. Likert scale response sets are also generally preferable to survey questions that pose multiple answers and ask respondents to “Choose all that apply.” Such questions effectively offer respondents a series of “Yes/No” questions. You will glean more and more nuanced information from breaking the question down into a series of Likert scale questions. In addition, ranking questions—in which respondents are asked to rank options in order of preference rather than merely marking all that apply—also offer more nuance than “choose all that apply” questions.

Open-ended questions gather qualitative detail. Surveys are designed to capture ideas we believe are important. In some cases, rather than push respondents toward particular ideas, we want them generate insights in their own words. Additionally, we may want qualitative examples to augment data gathered through Likert-scale questions. Under such circumstances, we can pose open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions in surveys should be very carefully framed so that respondents understand exactly what they are being asked. Unlike an interview, in which questions can be clarified if necessary, respondents are alone when they answer an open-ended survey question.

In addition, it is often advisable to “prime” students to answer an open-ended question by asking them related closed-ended questions just before the open-ended question is posed. This practice ensures that students are in the right headspace when asked to reflect.

When developing open-ended questions, it is important to keep in mind that analyzing them requires coding (a process described further in Module #4, Qualitative Data Analysis). Coding takes longer than analyzing quantitative survey data; this should be taken into account when considering how many open-ended questions to include in a survey.

Keep coding in mind

When developing open-ended questions, it is important to keep in mind that analyzing them entails coding, a process that requires more time than analyzing quantitative data.

Application to Example

As the Lucretia Mott design team develops responses for their survey items, they want to ensure they are providing sufficiently varied response sets to each question.

Using a Likert scale rather than a “yes/no” question. For the question, Do you like speaking with teachers about how you are doing in school? the team considers two potential response sets:

Too Little Variance	Just the Right Amount of Variance
(How much) do you like speaking with teachers about how you are doing in school?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> Some <input type="checkbox"/> A lot <input type="checkbox"/> Very much

The option with too little variance poses a major pitfall: because it gives the team only two groups to look at, when they examine the data, their insights will be limited. They may find, for example, that a majority of girls say “yes,” and a majority of boys say “no.” This is interesting, but lacking in nuance.

The second option—with just the right amount of variance—offers the team more groups to explore. For example, they might find that all of the girls’ responses fall into the “A lot” and “Some” categories, while the boys answer with “Very much” or “Not at all.” This yields a different and more complex story. Rather than concluding that girls like talking to adults about their future and boys do not, the team would find that girls are less emphatic in their opinions about talking to adults about their future, while boys take stronger stances, saying that they either really like it or really do not like it. These more nuanced findings will likely yield different interventions and designs than the question with too little variance.

Using a Likert scale or ranking rather than a “Choose all that apply” question. Recall that the team wants to know whether students would enjoy interacting with mentors from their own neighborhood; of their own race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation; or someone who has the same job they hope to have when they are older. Consider the following questions:

Too Little Variance	Just the Right Amount of Variance
Which of the following are important to you when choosing a mentor? Check all that apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The mentor is the same gender as me <input type="checkbox"/> The mentor is from my neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> The mentor is the same race/ethnicity as me <input type="checkbox"/> The mentor has the same sexual orientation as me 	How interested would you be in being paired in a mentoring relationship with someone who has the following characteristics? An adult who is the same gender as me <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested

<input type="checkbox"/> The mentor has a job I would like to have	<input type="checkbox"/> Very interested An adult who is from my neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested An adult who is the same race/ethnicity as me <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested An adult who has the same sexual orientation as me <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested An adult who has a job I would like to have <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> Not very interested <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested
--	--

The first option suffers from two issues. First, the team would get only “yes/no” level data for each answer, a problem discussed in the previous section. Second, most respondents will likely choose all four options. After all, if presented with the opportunity to select the characteristics you value in a mentor, why not choose all the good items? The team would not get a sense of how the different characteristics compare to each other.

The dangers of the “Yes/No” question

Remember, you can always combine groups after receiving scale responses, but you cannot impose nuance on a “Yes/No” question.

The Likert scale allows respondents to reflect and choose their preference for each separate characteristic, rather than giving each factor cursory “Yes/No” consideration. This approach offers more variance. Remember, you can always combine groups after receiving responses, but you cannot impose nuance on a “Yes/No” question. If for some reason posing a series of Likert-scale questions proves impractical, you can also ask respondents to rank their preferences, rather than merely “checking all that apply.”

Open-ended questions to glean rich description. The team would like to gather rich description of the benefits of positive relationships with adults at school, so they pose the question: Think of a teacher or counselor who has helped you a lot. What did that person do for you, and how did they help you?

4. Order Questions and Consider Sub-Groups

Key Information

Key considerations: Priming, and the placement of demographic questions. Every detail in a survey matters, including the order of the questions! There are two key considerations in ordering survey questions: priming, and the selection and placement of demographic questions. We also consider the appropriate length of the survey here.

Revise your questions with survey length in mind. As you review and order your questions, bear in mind that your survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. The table below lays out estimates of how long it takes to answer different types of questions:

Type of Question	Length of Time to Answer
Demographic questions	10 seconds
Likert-scale question	20-30 seconds
Likert-scale question that is especially long or requires a great deal of reflection	50-60 seconds
Brief open-ended question	60 seconds
Reflective open-ended question	2-3 minutes

Prime questions to prepare respondents for reflection. If you want respondents to reflect on a given topic, you should build up to that question with all related questions. Ordering questions in this manner “primes” respondents to provide rich reflections once they arrive at the open-ended question.

Priming is a psychological phenomenon used to prepare “headspace” for efficient response. Our brains operate in networks: when we access one area, the areas associated with it are also activated. Reflection is particularly hard for adolescents. If our group of interest is students and we want to know their preferences for learning environments, we would “prime” them for reflection by asking about learning styles, teacher characteristics, and school environments in forced choice questions. We would then provide them with the opportunity to answer in an open-ended manner.

Stereotype threat refers to a phenomenon in which awareness that one’s behavior might be viewed through the lens of racial, gender, or group stereotype affects one’s performance on a test or other measure. This term was first used by researchers Steele and Aronson, who showed in several experiments that Black college freshmen and sophomores performed more poorly on standardized tests than White students when their race was emphasized. When race was not emphasized, however, Black students performed better and equivalently with White students. This problem has been shown to affect individuals of both genders, many age groups, and some less formally defined groups like “jocks” and “nerds.”

Consider sub-groups to pose thoughtful demographic questions. When analyzing your data, you will want to consider whether relationships or insights you see in the overall group hold true for members of sub-groups. Sub-groups can be comprised of individuals who exhibit a particular behavior, such as low attendance or high participation in afterschool activities, or people who share certain demographic characteristics. The sub-groups you identify will be defined by the factors you expect to explain how responses to your survey questions vary.

It is advisable to directly ask these demographic questions in your survey. It is possible to obtain the data from outside sources and merge that data into your survey data (discussed further in Module #5, Quantitative Data Analysis), but it

can be quite challenging to do so. As long as you ask about things you are sure your respondents know and are not particularly controversial, it is better to simply ask within your survey.

However, while it is important to ask the questions, it is also important that you ask them last. This strategy avoids stereotype threat. The only exception to this rule is that if you need identifying information for data analysis purposes, such as the student's name or ID number, you should request it first, so that if the respondent stops taking the survey halfway through, you can still use his or her available answers.

For analysis purposes, it is best to measure as many potential grouping variables as possible. Standard grouping variables include gender, socioeconomic status (typically measured through free or reduced price lunch status or parental education), and race/ethnicity.

When considering demographic questions to pose at the end of your survey, consider the additional sub-groups you expect to be relevant to your analysis. When you think about the range of responses you expect to receive, what factors or characteristics do you think will predict differences in answers? Have you included questions that measure those factors? For example, do you expect that students who are active in after-school activities will report more positive relationships with adults at school? If so, it is critical to ask questions about students' participation in after-school activities!

Application to Example

When the Lucretia Mott design team orders their survey questions, they attend to issues of both priming and demographic questions.

Priming. The design team's survey will include an open-ended question that asks students to reflect on the positive impact of a relationship with an adult at school. To ensure students are primed to answer it, they precede the question with a series of questions about the characteristics of positive relationships with adults.

Demographic questions. In the survey, the design team will ask for "standard" sub-group information, as well as a few other grouping variables they expect to affect their analysis, such as the student's gender:

26. Did you play for a school sports team last year?

Yes No

27. Are you a member of any school clubs?

Yes No

28. How many times, if any, were you suspended in the last school year?

0 1 2 3 More than 3

29. What school do you currently attend? _____

30. What is your gender?

Female Male

31. What is your race/ethnicity?

- Decline to state Black Latino White Asian Pacific Islander
 Native American Other: _____

32. What is the highest level of education reached by your mother/female guardian?

- Not applicable I don't know Less than high school degree High school degree
 Some college College degree More than a college degree

33. What is the highest level of education reached by your father/male guardian?

- Not applicable I don't know Less than high school degree High school degree
 Some college College degree More than a college degree

5. Revise Using Survey Checklist

In the tools appendix, we provide a checklist intended to be used to review and revise your draft survey to ensure it answers the questions you want to answer and poses questions that are easy to answer honestly and easy to analyze. Here, we present a sample survey based on the work of the Lucretia Mott design team.

SAMPLE SURVEY

1. First name:
2. Last name:
3. Student ID:
4. There are adults at my school who care about me.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
5. Adults who care about me expect me to do my best in my classes.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
6. Adults who care about me expect me to behave well.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
7. Adults who care about me believe in me.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
8. Adults who care about me are strict.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
9. Adults who care about me give me consequences if I do something against the rules.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
10. Adults who care about me get me in trouble for no reason.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
11. Adults who care about me ask me how I am doing.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
12. Adults who care about me treat me like a friend.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
13. Adults who care about me give me a lot of freedom to do what I want.
 Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

14. Adults who care about me give me advice about...

a) School

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

b) Family

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

c) Friends

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

d) Boyfriends/girlfriends

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

15. If I am having a problem with my family, I feel comfortable talking about it with an adult at school.

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

16. If I am having a problem with another student, I feel comfortable talking about it with an adult at school.

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

17. If I am having a problem with a teacher, I feel comfortable talking about it with another adult at school.

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

18. How interested would you be in being paired with a mentor?

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

19. How interested would you be in being paired with a mentor who your school picks for you?

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

20. How interested would you be in being paired with a mentor who you pick out from options provided by your school?

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

21. How interested would you be in being paired in a mentoring relationship with...

a) An adult who is the same gender as me

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

b) An adult who is the same race/ethnicity as me

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

c) An adult who has the same sexual orientation as me

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

d) An adult who has a job I would like to have

Not at all interested A little interested Somewhat interested Very interested

22. Speaking with adults at school about the future is...

Not at all helpful A little helpful Somewhat helpful Very helpful

23. Adults at school who care about me have helped me...

a) Improve my grades

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

b) Improve my behavior

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

c) Set goals

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

d) Believe in myself

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

e) Deal with problems at school

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

f) Deal with personal issues

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

24. Think of a teacher or counselor who has helped you a lot. What did that person do for you, and how did they help you?

25. If you could offer a piece of advice to an adult in your school about how to have a better relationship with students, what piece of advice would you offer?

26. Did you play for a school sports team last year?

Yes No

27. Are you a member of any school clubs?

Yes No

28. How many times, if any, were you suspended in the last school year?

0 1 2 3 More than 3

29. What school do you currently attend? _____

30. What is your gender?

Female Male

- 31.** What is your race/ethnicity?
 Decline to state Black Latino White Asian Pacific Islander
 Native American Other: _____
- 32.** What is the highest level of education reached by your mother/female guardian?
 Not applicable I don't know Less than high school degree High school degree
 Some college College degree More than a college degree
- 33.** What is the highest level of education reached by your father/male guardian?
 Not applicable I don't know Less than high school degree High school degree
 Some college College degree More than a college degree

6. Field Test

Key Information

Before using your survey with a large group of respondents, it is advisable to field-test it through a process called “cognitive labbing.” Cognitive labbing entails finding a member of your target sample and asking them to go through the survey with you. While “cog-labbing” may seem like an onerous additional step, it will ultimately ensure that the survey is understandable to respondents, and yields the information you need. Including this step therefore aligns with Carnegie’s commitment to maximizing operational efficiency. There is nothing worse than administering a survey to a large group of people and finding out after the fact that some of your questions were confusing or unintelligible!

In the tools appendix, we present a simple protocol for “cog-labbing.” The following section on preparing for administration includes questions related to the logistics of arranging to “cog-lab” a survey.

Cognitive labbing refers to reviewing a survey with a member of its target sample with the goal of identifying any confusing items, unnatural language, or incomplete response sets.

7. Prepare for Survey Administration

Key Information

Determine how surveys will be administered. Surveys involve more people than focus groups or interviews, and so it is critical to think through how respondents will be selected and how they will take the survey. We recommend using SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo, or Google Forms to administer your survey. This mode of administration is a purposeful use of technology. Entering survey responses by hand is both boring and rife with opportunities for error. It is also typically unnecessary: most students have Internet access at school, and many students have Internet access at home. The planning worksheet in the tools appendix is designed to help you think through these considerations.

Consider how responses to your questions will likely vary across sub-groups. As noted in Section 4, a key question to consider is whether there are particular sub-groups of interest. As you identify survey participants, ensure you are inviting participants who represent a range of sub-groups of interest to your analysis.