

Constructing a Survey: An OPIHI Extension Activity

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Your assignment is to create a survey for your community to find out what the intertidal was like in the past compared to what is like today.

Steps to writing a good survey

1. Establish the goals of the project - What do we want to learn?
2. Determine your sample - Whom do we want to interview? How will we choose who we want to interview? How many people should we each interview?
3. Choose interviewing methodology - How will we conduct the interview? Will the survey be oral? Written?
4. Create your questionnaire – What kinds of questions should we ask? How many questions should we ask?
5. Pre-test the questionnaire, if practical
6. Conduct interviews and enter data - Ask the questions
7. Analyze the data – How should we analyze our data? How should we communicate our results?

Activity #1: There are many different kinds of questions you can ask in a survey. The following table summarizes some of them. In a group, write a question for each question category.

Survey Question Types

Type of question...	Best Used for...
<i>Open-ended</i>	Breaking the ice in an interview; when respondents' own words are important; when the surveyor doesn't know all the possible answers.
<i>Closed-ended</i>	Collecting rank ordered data; when all response choices are known; when quantitative statistical results are desired.
<i>Likert-scale</i>	To assess a person's feelings about something.
<i>Multiple-choice</i>	When there are a finite number of options (remember to instruct respondents as to the number of answers to select).
<i>Ordinal</i>	To rate things in relation to other things.
<i>Categorical</i>	When the answers are categories, and each respondent must fall into exactly one of them.
<i>Numerical</i>	For real numbers, like age, number of months, etc.

Activity #2: Sometimes the way we ask a question can be interpreted as leading, so we have to be careful to word questions carefully so our results will be accurate and not biased. Sometimes questions limit the responses people can give. Open-ended questions give the respondent and most flexibility and freedom in how they answer, but they also make it harder to compile your results, and generally take the participant longer to answer.

Discuss in a group the pros and cons of asking the following types of questions in a survey about the forest:

- 1) What was the forest like in the past?
- 2) How has the forest changed from the past to today?
- 3) Which of these is your best estimate of the number of trees here in the past?
 - a) more than 1000
 - b) 500-1000
 - c) less than 500
- 4) On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best you can feel and 1 being the worst)
How do you feel about collecting plants and mushrooms from the forest?
- 5) Taking plants from the forest is wrong. Do you agree?
- 6) How often do you go into the forest?
 - a) often
 - b) never
 - c) frequently

Activity #3: In a group, write five to ten questions to ask people in your community. We will be compiling the questions from class into a manageable number of questions for you to ask elder community members.

Keep the following in mind:

- Remember your survey's purpose
- Keep questions simple
- Stay focused – avoid vague issues
- Is a question can e misinterpreted – it will be
- Include only one topic per questions (avoid “double-barreled” questions)
- Avoid leading questions
- Consider alternative ways to ask sensitive questions