12 Things to consider when creating a survey

Creating a good survey is crucial for collecting valuable feedback and information.

We can set a survey up for you using Microsoft Forms and send you the results when it closes for you to analyse the data. All you need to so is follow these tips below.

Remember - the key to a successful survey is to make it as user-friendly and relevant as possible. A well-constructed survey can help you gain valuable insights to your group members.

Here are 12 things you can do to make your survey more effective

1. Define your purpose and objective

Start by clearly defining what you want to know from the participants and what you will use this data for. What information or feedback are you looking to gather from group members? Is there a particular part of your membership you want to hear from eg Students or mid-career or those in certain job roles?

If you want to include demographics we have standard terminology through our EDI work that links to the member survey which you can see by checking the survey.

2. Keep it concise

How often do you get 20 questions into a survey, realise how long it is taking and give up? Avoid long and complex surveys and aim for a concise 15 question maximum. Keeping it short and focussed should help increase response rates.

3. Choose the right question types

Use a range of question types, including multiple-choice, yes/no, number scale, order of answers, and/or open-ended questions. Each type serves a different purpose so choose wisely to get the data you need.

They can also be set to move the participant to a future question missing any that are not relevant to them depending on their answers.

4. Create clear and unbiased questions

Phrase questions in a clear and neutral manner to avoid a 'biased answer'. Avoid leading questions that push respondents toward a particular answer.

5. Start with easy questions, and arrange the others logically

Begin with straightforward and non-sensitive questions to engage respondents and build their confidence in the survey. You might want to ask about them first, what grade are they, what do they do as a job, how long have they worked in archaeology. Leaving any personal demographic questions until later and make these optional.

After the easy questions, see if the other questions you ask can be organised, so they flow through logically. Many questions on one topic could be organised under a subheading, for instance.

6. Include 'Other' or 'Not applicable' options

Include options like 'Other', 'Not applicable' or 'Prefer not to say' to account for situations where respondents may not fit into your predefined categories. This removes the likelihood for respondents to click an option that isn't quite right or skip the whole question, leaving you with inaccurate or incomplete results.

7. Do you really need a name?

If you want more honest feedback it helps to make your survey anonymous and can encourage more participation. However, if you think that names are important for data analysis you can ask this as an optional question, and must explain why, what it will be used for and how long it will be held for before deletion (GDPR).

8. Send your Word version to CIfA

Please send your survey to groups@archaeologists.net and we will set up your survey for testing and send you the link to check. We can also advise on the type of question to ask if you are unsure.

9. Test run your survey

Before launching the survey, conduct a test run with a small group to identify a confusing order or problematic question. We can erase their responses before launch.

10. Provide clear instructions and set a deadline

Include clear and concise instructions at the beginning of the survey, explaining its purpose and estimated time required and this can go in the email to group members.

Specify a deadline for survey completion to encourage timely responses. We advise a short-term such as 2 to 4 weeks to help with this, but it can be extended.

11. Say thanks

At the end of the survey it is good to include a thank you for their input and outline when you might analyse and report on the data received.

12. Analyse and act on the data

Once you collect the data, you will need to analyse it. We can send you the survey results in a spread sheet and in a report with graphs. Use these insights to make informed decisions or improvements within your group depending what your purpose was.

You could hold a committee meeting to discuss findings and agree what needs to be actioned. It is also useful to report back to your group members.