

What's Wrong With This Questionnaire?

This hypothetical questionnaire is to be conducted with the general population in an area of a city that has a high percentage of lower income households.

The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of a media campaign, which includes radio, television, and print PSAs.

The PSAs profiled existing physical activity programs in a specific geographical area. They portrayed the programs as fun, relaxed, and informal, and contained the message that the programs listed were free or inexpensive.

The program was developed in response to an evaluation of existing physical activity programs which revealed that the average household income of participants was significantly higher than the average for the community.

The objectives of the campaign are:

1. To increase awareness of free or low-cost physical activity programs in the community.
2. To increase the use of existing physical activity programs that are free or low-cost by families and individuals with an annual household income of \$25,000.00 or less.

This questionnaire contains several common errors. Please review the questionnaire and note the errors. We will discuss the errors together.

Questionnaire to Critique

Hello, my name is (INSERT YOUR NAME). I am calling to ask a few questions about advertising that has recently been conducted promoting low-cost and free physical activity programs in your community. Can I interview you now?

IF YES, CONTINUE

IF NO, THANK AND TERMINATE

Q.1 What is your annual household income?

\$ _____ .00

Q.2 Do you feel that the physical activity programs in your community are too expensive for you to participate in?

YES 1

NO 2

Q.3 Recently, the local Public Health Unit ran a series of PSAs promoting existing physical activity programming in your community. The PSAs ran across all media types and were in low to moderate rotation for the past month. The content was upbeat, including a catchy soundtrack, and focused on free and low-cost activities. Do you recall seeing or hearing any PSAs of this nature?

YES 1

NO 2

Q.4 Are you currently a member of a gym or fitness club, or do you participate in any regular physical activity program?

YES 1

NO 2

Q.5 Please tell me what regular physical activity you participate in.

Q.6 What was the media source that carried the PSA that you saw or heard?

RADIO	1
TV	2
WEEKLY NEWSPAPER	3
DAILY NEWSPAPER	4

Q.7 How would you rate the quality of the PSA(s) that you saw or heard? How much did you like them?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Terrible

Q.8 Would you say that the PSA that you saw increased your likelihood to participate in local physical activity programming?

YES	1
NO	2

Q.9 Did the media coverage that you saw or heard increase your awareness of free or low-income fitness and recreation opportunities in your community?

YES	1
NO	2

Q.10 Please tell me your name and address so we can send you some more information about fitness and recreation opportunities in your community.

Answer Key

Introduction

- A. This introduction gives away too much information about the subject. Awareness questions will be biased by the introduction.
- B. An introduction should:
- include the name of the organization conducting the survey, to ensure the validity to the respondent (in some special cases a “blind” survey is required, and the name will not be given)
 - let the respondent know how long the interview will take
 - let the respondent know that their responses will be confidential and anonymous

Here is an example of a better Introduction:

Hello, my name is (INSERT NAME), and I’m calling from the local Public Health Department. We are conducting a survey about the fitness and recreational sport opportunities in our community, and would appreciate your participation. The interview will take approximately five minutes. We are contacting approximately 200 people in the community, and I assure you that your name will not be associated with your answers. Would you like to take part in an interview now?

- Q.1** A. This question should never start a questionnaire. Personal information, such as income, should always be kept until the end of the interview when the respondent feels more comfortable and has a good understanding of the survey.
- B. The use of precoded income categories allows the respondent to simply pick a category as opposed to stating their income.
- Q.2** A. The respondent may be unfamiliar with the term “physical activity programming”. It would be better to use simple, clear language such as, “fitness and recreation opportunities”, or “sports and fitness activities”.
- B. As in Question One, any question dealing with money, or other personal issues, should be kept for later in the interview.

- Q.3** This is an “*aided awareness*” question. This means that you are telling the respondent exactly what PSA you are interested in, then asking whether or not they have seen or heard it. It is better to start with an “*unaided awareness*” question, such as “Have you recently seen, read, or heard anything about fitness and recreation programs in your community?” You want the question to be focused on your subject of interest, but not stating the exact PSA. Following up with an aided awareness question will give you a good idea of the awareness.

The term PSA may not be known. Use a term such as “advertising”, or “anything in the media”.

- Q.4** This is a double-barrelled question. It is asking two different questions and giving one response category. If this information is needed, it should be broken into two questions as follows:

Q.4 Are you currently a member of a gym or fitness club?

YES	1
NO	2

Q.5 Do you participate in any regular physical fitness program?

YES	1
NO	2

- Q.5** This question requires a skip pattern. If the respondent answers “No” in Question Four, meaning that they do not participate in any regular physical activity, then they should not be asked Question Five.

- Q.6** A. This question relates directly to Question Three and should follow right after it. Breaking up related questions is confusing for respondents, and interviewers!
- B. The term “media source” and PSA may not be understood by respondents. A simple way around these terms is:

Q.6 Where did you read, see, or hear this information?

- Q.7** A. This is double-barrelled question. Rating the quality is not the same as asking someone whether or not they liked it. A respondent may feel that the PSA is of high quality but not like it, or vice versa. This should be broken into two questions, if they are both necessary.
- B. The method of recording the response is different on this question from the other questions. This will make the data processing more difficult.
- Q.8** A. This question may be confusing for respondents. The terms “increase your likelihood” is not common language.
- B. The information that this question is asking for could be better obtained by the records of the programs themselves. Asking people if they are likely to do something can be valid, but wherever possible, record the “action” in a more objective, direct manner.
- Q.9** A. These questions are leading. In some cases, respondents will say yes to a question simply because they don’t want to appear uninformed. Open-ended questions can get at the same information, without leading the respondent. For example:
- What do you recall about the information that you read, saw, or heard?
- B. It would be more logical if this question were located closer to the other questions about the PSAs.

- Q.10** A. The revised introduction tells the respondent that the information they give is confidential. Asking for personal information after ensuring confidentiality needs to be explained clearly, and the respondent reassured that their name will not be associated with their responses.
- B. A question like this can generate hostility. If you need to ask respondents for personal contact information, the best way to do so is to state why you are asking, and then give them the option to provide the information.

Here is a better way to ask this question:

Q.10 Would you be interested in receiving a list of local free and low-cost fitness and recreation opportunities?

IF YES, CONTINUE

IF NO, SKIP TO GOODBYE

Q.11 Where would you like the information sent?
