Questionnaire Design Checklist

Dear Research Scholars,

This checklist provides a comprehensive set of points that should be reviewed before distributing your questionnaire to respondents. Carefully evaluating each aspect will help ensure that your questionnaire is clear, relevant, unbiased, and aligned with your research objectives. A well-designed questionnaire is the foundation of high-quality data collection, which ultimately leads to reliable, valid, and meaningful research findings.

Use this checklist as a final quality assurance tool to identify and correct potential issues before administering your survey.

1. Alignment with Research Objectives

Every question in a questionnaire should directly contribute to achieving one or more research objectives. Before including a question, the researcher should ask, "How will the answer to this question help solve my research problem?" Questions that are unrelated to the objectives increase respondent fatigue, make data analysis more complicated, and reduce the overall quality of the research. A well-aligned questionnaire ensures that every response collected has a clear analytical purpose.

Example:
If the research objective is "To examine the impact of employee training on job performance," then questions about training frequency, training quality, and job performance are relevant. Asking respondents about their favourite holiday destination would not support the objective and should therefore be removed.

2. Relevance of Every Question

Each question should collect information that will actually be analysed and reported in the research findings. Researchers sometimes add questions simply because they seem interesting, but if the responses will not be used during analysis, those questions should be eliminated. Relevant questions improve response rates and reduce unnecessary data collection.

Example:
In a customer satisfaction study for an online shopping website, asking "How satisfied are you with delivery speed?" is relevant. However, asking "What is your favourite television programme?" has no connection with customer satisfaction and should not be included.

3. Clarity of Language

Questions should be written using simple, clear, and unambiguous language that the target respondents can easily understand. Avoid technical jargon, abbreviations, and complex sentence structures unless the respondents are experts in that field. Clear wording minimises misunderstanding and improves the accuracy of responses.

Example:
Instead of asking "Evaluate the organisational communication paradigm," ask "How satisfied are you with communication in your organisation?" The second version is much easier for respondents to understand.

4. Avoid Leading or Biased Questions

Questions should be neutral and should not suggest a preferred answer. Leading questions influence respondents and introduce bias into the collected data, reducing the validity of the research findings. Neutral wording allows respondents to express their genuine opinions.

Example:
A leading question is:

"Don't you agree that online education is the best learning method?"

A neutral question is:

"What is your opinion about online education?"

5. Avoid Double-Barrelled Questions

A double-barrelled question asks about two or more issues within a single question, making it impossible to know which aspect the respondent is answering. Each question should measure only one concept to ensure accurate interpretation of responses.

Example:
Incorrect:
"How satisfied are you with the quality and price of the product?"

Correct:

1. "How satisfied are you with the quality of the product?"

2. "How satisfied are you with the price of the product?"

6. Response Options

Response options should be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. This means that answer categories should not overlap, and all possible responses should be covered. Where appropriate, options such as "Other" or "Prefer not to answer" should also be provided.

Example:
Incorrect age groups:

- 18–25
- 25–35
- 35–45

Here, age 25 and 35 belong to two categories.

Correct age groups:

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45 and above

7. Consistent Measurement Scales

Using consistent measurement scales throughout the questionnaire helps respondents answer more accurately and reduces confusion. Switching between different scales unnecessarily may cause respondents to misinterpret the response options and affect data quality.

Example:
If satisfaction is measured using a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

The same scale should be used throughout the questionnaire whenever possible.

8. Logical Flow

Questions should be organised in a logical sequence, beginning with general and easy questions before moving to specific or sensitive topics. Related questions should be grouped together into sections. A logical flow improves respondent engagement and reduces survey abandonment.

Example:
A customer satisfaction survey may be organised as follows:

- Section A: Shopping experience
- Section B: Product quality
- Section C: Customer service
- Section D: Future purchase intention
- Section E: Demographic information

9. Placement of Sensitive Questions

Sensitive questions regarding income, health, religion, or personal beliefs should be placed near the end of the questionnaire after respondents have become comfortable. Researchers should also assure participants that their responses will remain confidential.

Example:
Instead of asking monthly income in the first question, begin with general questions about purchasing behaviour and place income-related questions near the end with a confidentiality statement.

10. Clear Instructions

Respondents should receive clear instructions before starting the questionnaire and whenever the response format changes. Well-written instructions reduce errors, improve consistency, and minimise missing responses.

Example:
"Please select only one option."

"Tick all options that apply."

"Rate each statement using the following 5-point scale."

11. Appropriate Length

The questionnaire should be as short as possible while still collecting all necessary information. Long questionnaires increase respondent fatigue, reduce completion rates, and may lead to careless or incomplete answers.

Example:
If a research objective can be achieved with 30 questions, there is no benefit in asking 70 questions simply because additional information might be useful in the future.

12. Demographic Information

Only demographic variables relevant to the research should be collected. Unnecessary personal questions may discourage respondents and raise privacy concerns. Demographic questions are usually placed at the end unless they are required for screening participants.

Example:
For research on university students' learning behaviour, relevant demographic variables include:

- Age
- Gender
- Programme of study
- Year of study

Asking respondents about marital status may be unnecessary if it has no relationship with the research objectives.

13. Skip Logic or Branching

Skip logic ensures that respondents answer only the questions relevant to them. This improves respondent experience, reduces survey length, and prevents irrelevant data collection.

Example:

Q1: Do you own a car?

- Yes → Continue to Questions 2–10.
- No → Skip directly to Question 11.

Respondents who do not own a car should not answer questions about fuel consumption or vehicle maintenance.

14. Spelling and Grammar

Spelling, grammar, punctuation, numbering, and formatting should be carefully checked before administering the questionnaire. Errors may confuse respondents, reduce the professionalism of the survey, and affect the credibility of the research.

Example:
Incorrect:
"How satified are you wid our services?"

Correct:
"How satisfied are you with our services?"

A professionally presented questionnaire creates a positive impression and encourages participation.

15. Pilot Testing

Before the final survey is administered, the questionnaire should be tested with a small group of respondents similar to the target population. Pilot testing helps identify unclear wording, missing response options, technical problems, and the average time required to complete the survey.

Example:
A researcher developing a questionnaire for MBA students may first administer it to 20

MBA students. Their feedback can be used to revise confusing questions before collecting data from 500 students.

16. Reliability and Validity

A good questionnaire should consistently measure what it is intended to measure. Reliability refers to consistency of measurement, while validity refers to whether the questionnaire accurately measures the intended construct. Statistical techniques such as Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Content Validity, and Construct Validity are commonly used to evaluate measurement quality.

Example:
Suppose five questions are designed to measure job satisfaction. After pilot testing, the researcher calculates Cronbach's Alpha = 0.87, indicating good internal consistency. Factor analysis further confirms that all five questions measure the same construct, supporting construct validity.

17. Informed Consent

Every questionnaire should begin with an informed consent statement explaining the purpose of the research, voluntary participation, expected completion time, confidentiality, potential risks and benefits, and the researcher's contact information. Participants should voluntarily agree before proceeding.

Example:
"This survey is being conducted for academic research. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for research purposes. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete."

18. Confidentiality and Ethics

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to protect participants' privacy and personal information. Data should be anonymised wherever possible, stored securely, and used only for the stated research purpose. Researchers should also obtain approval from the appropriate ethics committee or institutional review board whenever required.

Example:
Instead of collecting respondents' names, assign unique participant codes such as P001,

P002, P003. Store the collected data in password-protected files and report only aggregated results (e.g., averages or percentages) so that no individual participant can be identified.