

## Objective Survey Question Scales

### General Tips

- A survey participant should be able to answer every survey item. Predict all the possible ways a person may respond and make sure the scale is inclusive of every invited participant. This may require an option such as:
  - Not applicable
  - No basis
  - Little to no evidence
  - Prefer not to say/answer
- When choosing between scale options, choose the option that results in the least amount of subjectivity. For example: When asking questions regarding the frequency at which someone does/does not do something, consider using as a rate of time (0% of the time,...,100% of the time) is much less subjective than the generic frequency of “Never” to “Always” and make sure you case those frequency questions within some bounds of time (e.g., in the past month, in the past year).
- Every option within a scale should have meaning. While these are objective questions, many responses are subjective. (e.g., what is “neutral” is not perceived the same for all participants.) Having a label for every option in the scale controls some of the subjectivity. If you choose to not label every option in the scale, be sure to have a justifiable reason for doing so.
- Researchers have differing opinions about the use of any neutral or indifferent response option. Use a neutral option when needed, exclude it when not needed. The neutral option is included within most samples below, to show where it would fit within the scale if included.
- The order of options in a scale typically has the “lowest” on the left and “highest” on the right. Modifying the order may help with survey validity, but also confuse participants.
- Similarly, when using numbers to identify the scale order, typically the “lowest” is 1, and the “highest” is the largest number.
- Unless a response is essential for your study design, responses to items should be optional. The primary reason is to avoid a forced response from participants when the scale has no response that fits.
- The count of options needed in your scale depends on how much distinction you need between the scale options. For example, two options are fine if you need “yes” or “no,” but they will not suffice if you must have degrees of agreement; however, if you fully intended to condense options in reporting, then consider providing the condensed options. For example:
  - Instead of: Strongly disagree(1), Disagree(2), Agree(3), and Strongly agree(4),
  - Just offer: Disagree(1) and Agree(2)
- Some scales have a single direction while some have two directions. Be sure the directions match the prompt.
- Use e-mail triggers if you may have circumstances that could require immediate attention. For example, suppose your survey is to obtain feedback after an event, and you ask

respondents if they want someone to follow-up with them. If a person indicates “yes,” presume the respondent is expecting follow-up asap, not after the survey ends.

## Sample Scales

The scales on the following page may be adapted based on your desired number of options and fit to the survey prompt. Note that the all response options shown below are categorical or ordinal in nature, and thus require non-parametric analysis methods. If your study requires parametric analysis, then create survey options resulting in continuous variables. For example, if you want frequency as a percent of time:

- Instead of: 0% of the time, up to 25% of the time, ..., 76-100% of the time,
- Obtain the specific rate of time between 0% and 100%.

If you want to know:	Use a variation of the following scales				
	1	2	3	4	5
Acceptability	unacceptable	slightly unacceptable	neutral	slightly acceptable	mostly or fully acceptable
Affect	no affect	minor affect	moderate affect	major affect	
Agreement	disagree	agree			
Agreement	no	yes			
Agreement	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree not disagree	agree	strongly agree
Agreement	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	
Beliefs	never true	rarely true	usually true	always true	
Beliefs	never true of me	rarely true of me	usually true of me	always true of me	
Comparative	very inferior	inferior	about the same	superior	very superior
Desirability	very undesirable	undesirable	neutral	desirable	very desirable
Difficulty	very difficult	difficult	neutral	easy	very easy
Expectations	does not meet expectations	meets expectations	exceeds expectations		
Frequency	never	occasionally	often	always	
Frequency	never	rarely	sometimes	very often	always
Frequency	never	seldom	some of the time	most of the time	all of the time
Frequency	very low	below average	average	above average	very high
Frequency of Use	never	almost never	occasionally	almost every time	always
Frequency, as rate of time	0% of the time	up to 25% of the time	26-50% of the time	51-75% of the time	76-100% of the time

If you want to know:	Use a variation of the following scales				
	1	2	3	4	5
Frequency, within a month (by week)	never	1-2 times per month	3-4 times per month	almost every week	at least once per week
Frequency, within a week (by day)	never	1-2 times per week	3-4 times per week	almost every day	at least once per day
Importance	not at all important	slightly important	somewhat important	very important	
Importance	extremely unimportant	somewhat unimportant	neutral	somewhat important	extremely important
Likelihood	definitely not	probably not	uncertain	probably	definitely
Likelihood	false	true			
Likelihood	not at all	very little	somewhat likely	to a great extent	
Priority	not a priority	low priority	moderate priority	high priority	highest priority
Probability	not probable	somewhat improbable	neutral	somewhat probable	very probable
Satisfaction	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	satisfied	very satisfied
Quality	very poor	poor	acceptable	good	excellent
Quantity	not at all	moderately	extremely		
Quantity	too little	about right	too much		
Value	very negative	negative	neither negative nor positive	positive	very positive