**Survey Design Bad Questions (Possible Solutions[[1]](#footnote-1))**

1. Biased/Leading question
   1. **What’s wrong?** If someone answers this question, then you are assuming that they went a college or university last year. But what if they didn’t? Those people cannot answer this.
   2. **Solution:** Convert to a logic if-then statement: If you went to a college or university last year, where did you go? If you did not go to a college or university last year, please type N/A in the answer space.
2. Double barreled question
   1. **What’s wrong?** If a person responds to this, are they answering with respect to the instructor’s teaching method, grading method, or both?
   2. **Solution**: Break this question into two questions:
      1. How would you rate your instructor’s teaching method?
      2. How would you rate your instructor’s grading method?
3. Categories are not mutually exclusive
   1. **What’s wrong?** An individual could fall into multiple categories (e.g. an advisor could also be a teacher).
   2. **Solution**: Allow for multiple checkmarks: Please let us know who referred you to the career center by putting a checkmark (🗸) to *the left* of your choice. (please check all that apply)
4. Exclusion of neutral viewpoint
   1. **What’s wrong?** What if a potential respondent does not agree or disagree with the helpfulness of their professor?
   2. **Solution**: Add a neutral statement:

Strongly agree  
Agree

Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

1. Double negative
   1. **What’s wrong?** This is an example of bad wording as the question is confusing and lacks clarity.
   2. **Solution:** Remove any negative and balance: In your view, what is the possibility that you will get an A in this course?
2. Unknown response
   1. **What’s wrong?** The main difficulty that a respondent would have in answering this question is in measurement. Is the question indicating seconds, minutes, hours, etc.?
   2. **Solution:** Indicate intent by labeling the question or answer space
      1. Labeling the question: Assuming you attend class on the main campus, how much time does it take for you get to you there? If you do not attend class on the main, campus, please type N/A in the answer space. (please answer in minutes)
      2. Labeling the answer space: \_\_\_ *minutes*
3. Unbalanced response choices
   1. **What’s wrong?** A respondent is forced to choose a positive response.
   2. **Solution:** Balance the options

Best ever  
Great but not the best ever  
Good but not great

Okay but not good

Not good but not bad

Bad but not the worst

Worst ever

1. Assumption of result
   1. **What’s wrong?** What if a participant does not study. Moreover, even if a responded does study, the question assumes that they enjoy it.
   2. **Solution:** Convert to a skip logic[[2]](#footnote-2) question:
      1. Do you study? (if yes, move to ii., else move on to the next question)
      2. Do you enjoy studying? (if yes, move to iii., else move on to the next question)
      3. Where do you enjoy studying?
2. Ambiguous
   1. **What’s wrong?** A potential respondent will not know how to answer this since the choices do not align with the question.
   2. **Solution:** Convert the choices to match the question:

Yes

Possibly

No

I have no opinion

1. Non-exhaustive categories
   1. **What’s wrong?** Individuals who get a majority of their textbooks from other online sources, via a brick and mortar store, or by any other means cannot answer this question.
   2. **Solution:** Easiest way to amend this is to add an open-ended choice:

Amazon

Barnes and Noble

University Bookstore

Abe Books

CampusBooks

Other (please list all):

1. Note: **Solutions** are not unique. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Also known as conditional branching, **skip logic** is a command structure that alters what question or page a respondent sees directly next based on how they answer a current question. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)