

Matching Survey Scales to Desired Assessment Outcomes

When choosing a response scale, consider the topic being assessed and how best to elicit responses. The four examples of assessment types below (Satisfaction, Skills/Change, Behavior, and Needs Assessment) can be evaluated using different scales.

Keys to Success:

- Scales provide a range of responses for survey-takers. Using appropriate measurement scales helps the participants to report more accurately about their experience.
- The most effective scales are not too long, nor too short. Typically, the best scale offers 3-6 options.
- Providing a “not applicable” option allows individuals to indicate non-participation or opt out of answering.
- To measure skills and change, you can perform a single assessment following a program or event, and ask about change. Alternatively, you may consider measuring skills before and after your program/interaction and looking at the difference.

1) Examples of questions and scales measuring SATISFACTION:

- **“How satisfied were you with [program/experience]?”**
 - (5 options) very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, satisfied, very satisfied
- **“Indicate your agreement with the following statements:”**
 - (4) strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree
 - **“The presenter was thorough”**
 - **“The room was large enough”**
 - **“The material was easy to understand”**
- **“How clearly did the presenter explain the material?”**
 - (3) not clearly at all, somewhat clearly, very clearly
- **“Compared to others you’ve attended, how would you rate this [program/experience]?”**
 - (4) poor, mediocre, good, excellent
 - (5) poor, below average, average, above average, excellent
- **“How _____ was the [program/service provided]?”**
 - **Useful:** (3) not useful at all, somewhat useful, very useful
 - **Helpful:** (3) not at all helpful, somewhat helpful, very helpful
 - **Effective:** (3) not at all effective, somewhat effective, very effective

2) Examples of questions and scales measuring SKILLS & CHANGE:

- **“After the training, how _____ are you to [task or outcome]?”**
 - **Prepared:** (4) very unprepared, somewhat unprepared, somewhat prepared, very prepared
 - **Likely:** (3) unlikely, somewhat likely, very likely
- **“Since participating in the program, how _____ do you feel to do [task or outcome]?”**
 - **Able/Capable:** (3) Not capable at all, somewhat capable, very capable
 - **Knowledgeable:** (4) Less knowledgeable, neither more or less knowledgeable, somewhat more knowledgeable, much more knowledgeable

- **“Compared to before the workshop, I am now _____ that I can do [task/topic]”**
 - (5) much less confident, somewhat less confident, neither more nor less confident, somewhat more confident, much more confident
- **“How would you compare your skill or understanding of _____ [task/ability/content] between when you started this class/workshop and now?”**
 - (3) Worse than before, About the same, Better than before
 - (4) Worse, Same, Improved somewhat, Improved a lot
 - * Note: When asking this type of question, you can get at the impact of a program/service, but cannot measure the specific skill level for the participants (because there is no specific measurement of where they started and ended).

Ask the following questions as a pair to measure change over time (or before and after an activity). Use the same scale so that you can compare results.

- **Before attending the program, how would you have rated your skill or understanding of _____ [task/ability/content] compared to your peers?***
 - (5) Lowest 10%, Below Average, Average, Above Average, Top 10%
 - * Note: If asked as a pre-program assessment, use the present tense “how would you rate your....”
- **Since attending the program, how would you rate your skill or understanding of _____ [task/ability/content] compared to your peers?**
 - (5) Lowest 10%, Below Average, Average, Above Average, Top 10%

3) Examples of questions and scales measuring BEHAVIORS:

- **“How frequently do you _____ [task/behavior]”**
 - (4) never, seldom, occasionally, frequently,
- **“How often do you _____ [task/behavior]”**
 - Less than 1 time/wk, 1-2 times/wk, 3-4 times/wk, 5-7 times/wk, more than 7 times per week
 - * Note: Make the range of response options reasonable considering the task.
- **How much time did you spend on [task/behavior] this week?**
 - Less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, 7-8 hours, 9 or more hours
- **How many times did you visit _____ [office/location] this month?**
 - Not at all, once, two to three times, four to five times, more than five times

4) Examples of questions and scales measuring NEEDS:

- **“How much of [specific program/service] would you like?”**
 - (5) much less, a little less, the same amount, a little more, much more
- **“How important is it for you to have [specific program/service]?”**
 - (3) Not very important, somewhat important, very important

- Please indicate how _____ each of the following programs or services are to you:
 - **Useful:** (3) not useful at all, somewhat useful, very useful
 - **Accessible:** (4) completely inaccessible, somewhat inaccessible, somewhat accessible, very accessible

The following three questions assess needs indirectly, by asking about confidence and likelihood of participation, which may indicate the need for more information or more access to a service/program.

- “How likely are you to [use/attend/participate] in _____ [specific program/service]?”
 - **Likely:** (3) unlikely, somewhat likely, very likely
- Please indicate your likelihood of doing _____ [participating in a program or service] on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = unlikely, 3 = neither likely or unlikely, and 5 = very likely.
- Please indicate your confidence in finding the following [offices/services] on campus:
 - (3) not confident, somewhat confident, very confident

For more information, check out the following documents located at: www.sairo.ucla.edu/AssessmentSupport.html

- Worksheet for Assessment Planning
- Survey Planning Checklist
- Writing Effective Survey Questions
- Tips for Assessing Workshops
- Common Pitfalls to Good Survey Questions
- Links to Additional Resources