

# Writing Effective Survey Questions

## Keys to Success:

- Make questions easy to answer: Use short questions, consistent response scales, and plain, precise language.
- Where possible, allow the respondents to: skip a question or answer “not applicable” or “I don’t know.”
- Group questions regarding similar topics together

There are three main types of survey questions. The following section provides information about each type.

### 1. Multiple Choice

- Two or more responses; May offer a “yes/no” response or a series of responses.
- Good questions are specific as to activity, time, and response options.
  - Single item: **How many residence hall events did you attend this quarter?**
    - (response options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more)
  - Bank of items: **How many of each of the following events did you attend this quarter?**
    - (response options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or more)
    - residence hall events
    - club meetings
    - parties
  - Categorical/Demographic: **In which residence hall do you reside?**
    - (response options: Dykstra, Reiber, Delta Terrace)
  - Factual/Test Question: **What is the correct answer to the following problem: 2+2=**
    - (response options: 4, 6, 7, 8)

### 2. Rating:

- Allow respondents to indicate their feelings on a scale (e.g. agree/disagree, satisfied/dissatisfied).
- Response options should include a “not applicable” (N/A) response if there was a chance the respondent may not have had the experience.
- Response options can include a “neutral” response worded as “neither \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - Single Item: **“How satisfied were you with the food in the dining hall this quarter?”**
  - (responses: “Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied, N/A”)
  - Bank of Items: **“Think about the last time you ate a meal in the dining hall, and indicate your agreement with the following statements:**
  - (responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, N/A)
    - “The dining hall was clean,”
    - “It was easy to find a place to sit,”
    - “There was enough food available”

### 3. Open-ended:

- Allow a respondent to share about their experiences in their own words.
- Should be written to allow individuals to elaborate.
  - **“What other services would you like the residence hall to provide?”**
  - **“How can dining services improve the breakfast experience?”**

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

- Worksheet for Assessment Planning
- Survey Planning Checklist
- Matching Survey Scales to Desired Outcomes
- Links to Additional Resources

