

PRIMARY SOURCES (INFORMAL SURVEYS)

Again, using primary sources in your writing can be an excellent way to break the monotony of simply reporting information from using secondary sources. Informal Surveys are an excellent way to collect information on topics which are not readily accessible through secondary sources.

First thing to do: Decide how to conduct the informal survey.

I suggest constructing a questionnaire of some form.

QUESTIONING

Begin with very general questions such as (and be prepared to make some of the responses optional):

Name (you may need to ask if the subject will allow you to use their name publicly)

Date

Time

Year of Birth

Location (City or State)

Next,

Ask questions which are specific to your topic.

DESIGNING QUESTIONS

You may choose a few different methods to solicit answers:

+Closed questions (or multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, etc.)

+Open questions (or essay questions, short answer questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, etc.)

+Scaled/Scalar questions

+Ranked questions

LIKERT SCALES (Preference between Agree and Disagree)

I love Vanilla Ice-Cream.

Strongly

Disagree _____ Strongly Agree

SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIALS (Using Opposing Adjectives to Gauge an Opinion)

Simple _____ Difficult

Interesting _____ Boring

GENERAL RANKINGS

Question:

What is your preferred availability?

Place 1 next to the time your most prefer.

Place 2 next to the time you prefer second,

And, so forth.

8:00AM ____

9:00AM ____

10:00AM ____

HIERARCHICAL RANKINGS

What do you consider most important in a friend?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

SURVEY DELIVERY FORMAT

You may choose a few different methods to solicit responses:

+Email Questionnaires

+Web Questionnaires (e.g. using survey sites - allowing you to design the survey)

+Telephone Questionnaires

+Mailed Questionnaires

ORDERING QUESTIONS

The Order of you Questions may be very important. Consider this: If a subject (the person answering the questions) is in a hurry, placing the easy questions at the beginning may help to solicit a quicker and more thorough response). Moreover, placing easy questions at the beginning helps the subject to "Open Up" to answering more difficult questions later. On the other hand, if you have a longer survey, it might be better to put the challenging questions first (allowing a person to use most of their energy in answering these questions first).

SOME ADVICE

Again, be careful not to ask questions which are too personal or which may be considered too challenging to your subject (the person being surveyed).

EXAMPLE

Here is a short survey which you can administer to a few friends or classmates (let them know that this survey is strictly informal and will only be used for learning purposes).

1. What kind of operating system do you use? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Windows-Based
- b) Apple
- c) Linux

2. How many hours do you spend on your computer per day? CIRCLE ONE

- a) One to Five Hours
- b) Six to Ten Hours
- c) More than Ten Hours

3. Do you feel like your eyes get tired when staring at the screen for more than an hour? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

4. Do your eyes ever get red or "blood-shot" when staring at the screen for a long period of time? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

5. Do you wear glasses? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

6. Do you ever get headaches when using the computer? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

7. Do you ever get headaches from staring at the screen? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

8. Have you ever altered the screen modulation settings? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. If so, what is your screen modulation set to? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Less than 75hz
- b) 75hz-100hz
- c) 101hz-150hz
- d) More than 150hz
- e) I Don't Know/I'm Not Sure

10. How far from the screen are your eyes (on average)? CIRCLE ONE

- a) 12 inches or Less
- b) More than 12 inches

11. Do flashing objects on the internet or the computer seem to irritate your eyes?
CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

12. Do flashing objects on the internet seem to annoy you? CIRCLE ONE

- a) Yes
- b) No

Note: After you have completed the survey, tally the results from the survey. Make sure that your total number of responses for each question matches the total number of surveys you administers (this step prevents any sources of error in the survey process in relation to the number of participants).

STRATEGY

Notice how questions 6 & 7 are very similar. Additionally, notice how questions 11 & 12 are almost exactly the same. You can repeat important questions in your survey using different words. This approach may be used for two reasons: 1) Asking the question twice allows for the subject to "open up" to the question... In this case, you ignore the answer from the first question, and use the second question's answer. In other words, trust the answers to the second question rather than the first (when you ask difficult questions, people are sometimes reluctant to answer honestly the first time). 2) If a person is not answering the questions properly, your answers from both questions may not be answered synonymously (meaning that someone did not do the survey correctly or was not taking the survey seriously).

WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU ADMINISTER THE SURVEY: THE CODING PROCESS

Now that you have administered the survey, tally up the results from the surveys; we call this coding. [CODING]

Once you have all the numerical information, you can report this information using "raw numbers" (e.g., writing something like: 10 out of 100 respondents stated X) Or, you can report your information as "percentages" (e.g., writing something like: 10% of respondents stated X). Configure the results into percentages by dividing the number of responds by the total number of respondents/subjects. These percentages will allow you to make a claim based on the results of the questions. [RESULTS/FINDINGS]

Now, ask yourself, what kinds of conclusions can I make based on this information? What have you learned? And, how might you apply this information?
[CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION]

USING SURVEYS INSIDE YOUR TEXT

Customarily, when using survey results inside of your text, a writer must describe the conditions of the survey. We recommend using the Micro-IMRAD system.

IMRAD or I'M RAD is an acronym used for the process of reporting experiment-based or research-based data scientifically.

Introduction
Methods/Materials
Results
And
Discussion

Usually, a person will write a paragraph to a few pages on each section; however, with using a survey in your paper, you may adopt the IMRAD form into something we like to call the Micro-IMRAD form.

Simply, discuss that you completed a survey. Discuss how the survey was constructed and administered.

EX:

In order to understand how college-aged students felt about smoking, a survey was constructed asking pertinent questions in regards to smoking and smoker health. Each survey had 10 questions (asking questions such as: Do you smoke? How long have you

smoked? Does smoking bother you? Does the smell of cigarette smoke/cigar smoke seem unpleasant to you? Etc.). Further, this survey was provided to subjects/respondents via a survey site online.

Next, discuss the results/findings (using "raw numbers" or "percentages"). Then, discuss how these results or findings may lead you to conclusions or claims.

Typically, in addition to outlining and describing how you conducted the survey, you will want to include a copy of the survey attached to the end of your paper (especially if the instructor asks specifically for a copy). Otherwise, including the survey questions is a good practice.

Note: You can use text to display your results, or you can use a combination of text and a visual (using a chart, graph, or other visual to display your findings/results).