Ofcom

Evaluation Toolkit:

Top Tips for surveys and quizzes

Making Sense
of Media

Contents

Top Tips: Surveys and quizzes

Introduction

Surveys and quizzes are often used to collect data from participants in media literacy programmes in order to evaluate the intervention's impact and to find out what the participants think could be improved. Surveys and quizzes can produce data to demonstrate the impact of an intervention, while surveys can also be used to deepen your insight into your participants' experience of taking part.

Using surveys allows you to gather data from a relatively large number of people (compared with more time-consuming methods such as interviewing) and can therefore help to ensure that you have a representative sample. If you establish a control group, the survey data from each can be used to demonstrate whether your intervention had a statistically significant impact on the participants.

Many practitioners will survey participants (or conduct a quiz) before and after an intervention to detect any change in their relevant attitudes, knowledge or skills. A pre-intervention survey can be used to establish a baseline. and the same questions could be repeated at the end of the intervention. You could also repeat the survey at a later date (e.g. three or six months later), to collect longitudinal data (collected over time). It is helpful to ensure that you can link the answers back to individual participants so that you can establish which individuals' responses change (and whether any do not).

Some practitioners choose to present questions designed to test participants' knowledge or skills as a quiz which can, for example, be completed as part of a workshop – either using pen and paper or online.

Key issues

- It can be hard to ensure completion: some audiences find questionnaires difficult to complete and others might lack the time and motivation.

- Beware of response bias, whereby only those with a strong positive or negative reaction to the intervention complete the survey.

- As survey data is self-reported, it comes with limitations, although these can be reduced if you also incorporate a quiz/ test of knowledge.

- Depending on the scale and target audience(s) of your intervention, you might consider creating different surveys for different beneficiaries.

- If your participants are likely to have internet access (e.g. through a mobile phone or during the workshops), asking them to complete the survey online will reduce the time needed for data entry and cleaning compared with a paper survey.

Choosing your methodology

As outlined above, you can conduct a quiz or survey in a range of ways: online, using pen and paper or using other methods such as telephone/face to face or even SMS/text message. Below are a few things you should consider.

1. **What will be easiest for your participants?** Think about how well your audience can read and how confident they would be online. Many organisations opt for online surveys if they are the best fit for their participants, but you can also consider making the survey more accessible by offering to read it to the participant. However, keep in mind that if you use different approaches for different people the results might not be directly comparable.

2. **How will you analyse the data?** Pen and paper surveys are easy to administer but people can find it hard to follow instructions; sometimes they tick several boxes when they should only tick one. etc. An online survey can have the instructions embedded. Also, if the survey is completed online, you do not have to enter the data manually (which takes time and can lead to errors).

3. **How can you maximise the number of responses?** One measure of the quality of any survey data is the number of people who completed it compared with the number of people asked to complete it. You can improve this ratio by administering the survey while people are still with you, but this means you won't capture the longer-term impact. Alternatively, plan to send reminders to people after you invite them to participate – about three reminders is considered good practice.

Although it might seem easiest to use tools you are familiar with, there are specialist applications/ websites for setting up surveys which can give participants a better experience and which will create a better dataset for you to use. Some of these tools are free or low cost. Some even enable you to conduct a survey by text message. When looking at options, and their functionality and ease of use, also consider the terms and conditions of the provider (some tools are not designed for use with children) and also think about GDPR and where the data will be hosted.

Analysis

Analysing your survy responses doesn't need to be complicated and if you put the data into spreadsheet software it can do most of the hard work for you.

Some things to think about:

- **Input your data:** If you used pen and paper, your first task is to input the data so that you can work with it more easily. To do this, one option is to set up a spreadsheet and have one row for every participant. Think carefully how to set up the columns to make your analysis easier (e.g. if a participant can tick several answers then you might want to have multiple columns to capture everything they ticked). If your data is really simple you could also make a tally chart to count how many people gave each answer but this makes it harder to look for patterns in the data.

- **Clean your data:** Before you start the analysis, make sure you have a clean dataset. By this we mean check that it doesn't contain duplicates, that all the questions have been answered, etc.

- **Code your data:** If you asked any open-ended questions, it can be a good idea to read all the answers and then code them by theme so that you can count the responses more easily.

- **Start the analysis:** Often it's easier to see what is happening if you produce visual representations of the data. Typically, if you have fewer than 100 participants it may be better to report raw numbers than percentages, but you can use a stacked bar chart or a pie chart to help you show the proportion of people who said something. If you used a Likert scale, you could compare the average score of the group before and after to see whether their confidence improved.

- **Difference in difference:** A good way to demonstrate impact is to run a quiz before and after and see if people do better afterwards. It's better to do this by comparing individuals' before and after results rather than trying to do it at a group level, so you can see who improved and who didn't (someone always gets worse!). Ideally, you would run the same quiz with a control group to see if they also got better as they went along.

Sample survey

This is an example of a survey, created for the (fictional) Digital Sleuth Club for its audience to complete before and after participation in its workshops. It provides some examples of the types of questions that you might want to ask participants in your interventions.

Note: it can be helpful to take questions from established surveys suitable for the age group you are targeting. The Ofcom website can be a good place to look for inspiration.

Section 1: Introduction and background information

The **introduction** should set out everything people need to know in order to give their informed consent. This includes telling them who will see their data, what it will be used for, informing them that they can withdraw from the survey at any time (or skip questions) and telling them that they can request that their data is removed from the evaluation (although if the data is collected anonymously this may not be possible).

Depending on what questions you ask, you might also want to include information about any safeguarding measures in place – for example, if someone tells you something that makes you worried about them, will this trigger any action?

A '**background information'** section aims to obtain data that allows you to see if your intervention works better for some than for others. You might want to seek information about participants' age, gender, geographic location etc (although you might already know some of this.)

You might also want to include some questions that help determine socio-economic status, such as household income, although this will be difficult when participants are children and young people. In general it is advisable to keep more sensitive questions such as income or ethnicity to the end of the survey as people may find them off-putting.

Example

We want to make sure our workshops are accessible and inclusive. Telling us a little about yourself will help us make sure they are working for everyone. If we find that they are more useful for some people than others, we can make changes to improve this.

Please write down the ID number you were given at the start of the workshop. This enables us to match your answers in the different surveys without requiring you to use your name. Once the evaluation is complete, we will delete all records of who was allocated each ID number so the data will be fully anonymous.

- ID number:

Which of the following are you? Please select one option

- Man / boy
- Woman / girl
- Non-binary
- Prefer to use another term (please specify - optional)
- Prefer not to say

Section 2: Your thoughts about misinformation, disinformation and online content

This section aims to ask questions related to the desired outcomes identified in the evaluation framework. For Digital Sleuth Club they are:

- Improvement in ability to detect misinformation (assessed through a quiz at the beginning and end of the workshop).

- Increased comprehension of how the digital media ecosystem works.

- Understanding how verified online content is produced and how to identify it, and how to spot advertising content online.

Here, you should ask closely linked questions before and after the intervention, to see if it is likely that your intervention changed your participants' knowledge, skills or attitudes.

Example

The following questions use a rating system typically used in questionnaires or surveys to assess people's attitudes, perceptions or opinions, called the Likert scale. The questions below have been taken from Ofcom's published research which you can find in our media literacy research library survey, so you can compare the results of your participants against the general public. However, not all these questions may be relevant to your intervention.

It is good practice to include a 'don't know' option. Sometimes surveys exclude this mid-point to force participants to express an opinion. It is helpful to number the response options (e.g. 'strongly agree' could be 5, and 'strongly disagree' could be 1), as this supports the data analysis and interpretation.

Asking about confidence can be particularly useful because it enables you to compare people's confidence with their actual knowledge levels in specific aspects of media literacy, enabling you to highlight gaps between the two.

How confident are you in recognising what is advertising and what is not, when you see or read things online? Please select one option

- Very confident: 1
- Fairly confident: 2
- Neither confident nor not confident: 3
- Not very confident: 4
- Not at all confident: 5
- Don't know

How confident are you in judging whether the information you see or read online is true or false? Please select one option

- Very confident: 1
- Fairly confident: 2
- Neither confident nor not confident: 3
- Not very confident: 4
- Not at all confident: 5
- Don't know

When you use a search engine to find information, you enter a query in the search box and the search engine will then show some links to websites in the results pages. Which one of these is closest to your opinion about the level of accuracy or bias of the information detailed in the websites that appear in the results pages? Please select one option:

- I think that if they have been listed by the search engine, these websites will have accurate and unbiased information.
- I think that some of the websites will be accurate or unbiased and some won't be.
- I don't really think about whether or not they have accurate or unbiased information, I just use the sites I like the look of.
- Don't know.

In the questions above, participants gave a single answer which makes it easy to compare their answers with others. You may also want to ask questions where they can tick more than one answer, but note that these are less easy to compare, although they are still easier to analyse than free text questions.

If you come across claims which some people are making and that could be considered as false or misleading, what (if anything) do / will you do after seeing them?

- Forward/share it with people I know.
- Use a fact-checking site or tools.
- Use tips from media such as BBC website.
- Check with family and friends whether it is misleading.
- Ask the person who forwarded/shared it with me whether it is accurate.
- Block it or report it to a social media platform.
- Other (SPECIFY).
- Do nothing.

Section 3: Self-reported impact / unintended consequences

As well as asking about the things you expect your intervention to change, you might also want to ask for more information about other impacts (or unintended consequences) and whether the participants themselves attribute these to participating in the intervention.

The following question is a free-text question, which allows participants to write whatever they like.

Free text provides narrative data, which takes longer to analyse, so it isn't recommended to include too many of these questions. But giving participants the opportunity to express themselves in this way can provide more nuanced insight as well as unanticipated results.
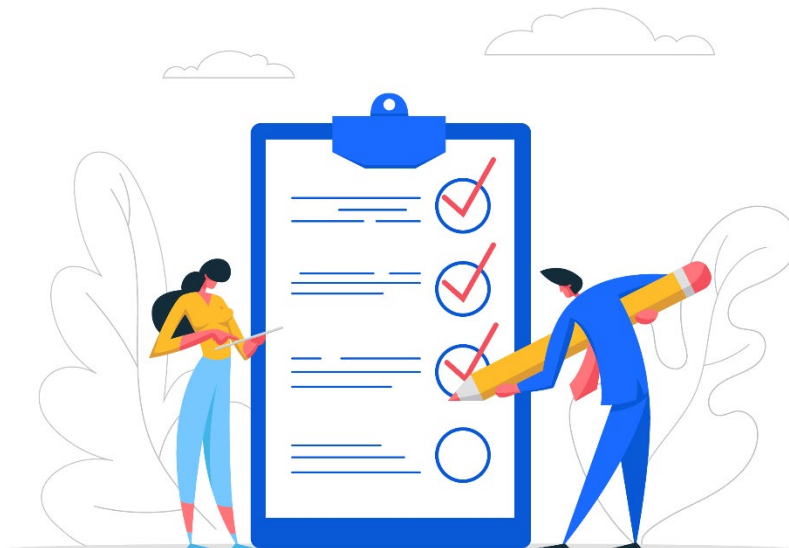
Example

(Post-workshop only) Please tell us about any other changes in your approach to online content that have happened since you attended the workshop.

[Free text]

(Post-workshop only) How much, if any, of the change you have reported do you feel has happened as a result of attending the workshop?

- None
- Some
- About half
- Most
- All

# Section 4: Objective test of skills / knowledge

The questions above capture how the workshop has made people feel about their skills, which is important. However, it might not paint an accurate picture of whether your intervention was a success. For example, what if a person entered the workshop overconfident in their skills and left with a more realistic understanding?

Their answers to the questions above might show a decrease in confidence, but the second measure is likely to be a better reflection of their actual skills. It can therefore be useful to ask questions that directly check whether people have taken on board, and can apply, the new skills they have been taught.

Example

A boy/ girl aged n called Eddie/ Ellie used Google to search for 'children's trainers' – the search results looked like this: Look at the top four results, do you know why these appear first?

- These are adverts/ they have paid to be here
- These are the best results
- These are the most popular results
- Anything else
- Don't know
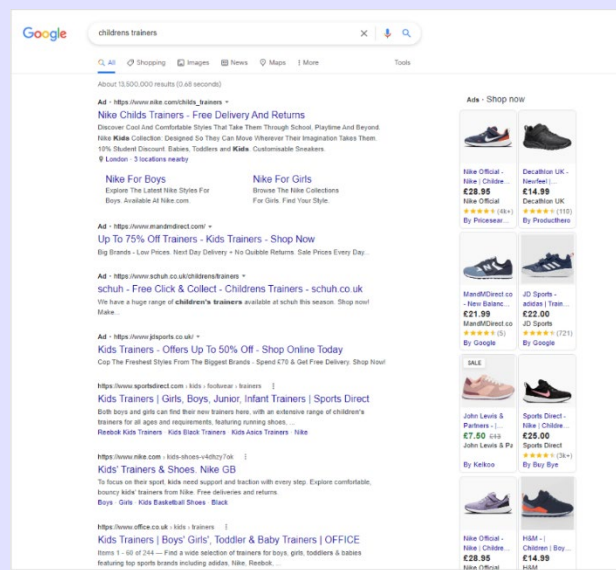
Section 5: Feedback

A feedback section in a post-intervention survey provides an opportunity to learn more about participants' experience, what impact it has had (in their own words) and how it can be improved.

Ideally, the whole questionnaire should take 10 minutes or less to complete.

If you are doing a lot of workshops and have the option to change them over time you may want to include more detailed questions about the delivery, such as whether participants agree or disagree that the pace of the workshop, content/ topics of the workshop, the use of exercises in the workshop, etc, were appropriate.

Example

(Post-workshop only) We are very interested to know about your experience of the workshop, so that we can make improvements where necessary.

How likely, if at all, are you to recommend this course to a friend with similar online skills to you?

1. Not at all likely
2. A little likely
3. Somewhat likely
4. Quite likely
5. Very likely

What, if anything, did you particularly enjoy about the workshop?

[Free text]

What, if anything, did you find most useful?

- Session 1 – Introductions
- Session 2 – Intro to media literacy
- Session 3 – Questions and answers
- Session 4 – Applying what we learned
- Session 5 – Reflections

What could be improved about the workshop experience?

[Free text]

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

[Free text]

Things to consider

Do:

- Gain the consent of your participants to be surveyed (including telling them if you plan to link their before and after data).

- Think about the demographic information that would be useful for the purposes of analysis and only ask for what you need.

- Obtain a baseline measure and find a way to link your participants' pre- and post-intervention responses. Ideally, don't use their names, so that anyone viewing the dataset won't automatically know who said what.

- Link each question to an outcome of interest.

- Make it clear to your participants that they are not being 'tested' (particularly when working with children and young people).

- Think about how you will do the analysis before you start and design the pre- and post- questionnaires together to ensure that they work together and that you collect the data you need.

Don't:

- Ask leading questions or include assumptions in your questions (see example below).

- Make the survey too long, as this will be off-putting to many audiences, particularly children and others who might take longer to interpret questions and produce answers. It will also reduce the quality of the data you get back.

- Make unnecessary changes to the questions between a pre- and post-intervention survey, as you want to be able to use them for comparison.

- Require people to use their real names if they are uncomfortable doing so.