

Testing and Piloting your Survey

Goals of Testing and Piloting Your Survey

1. Identify spelling and grammatical errors.
2. Ensure that questions are understood by others the way you wanted them to be.
3. Understand and improve the overall experience of taking your survey.
4. Discover issues with how the survey has been coded in your survey software.
5. Look at test or pilot data in your analysis software to make sure it is clear and usable.

Once you have a draft of your survey, it is important to test and pilot your survey. For one, this can help you identify confusing questions or errors in your survey. Both having someone read your survey and having someone fill out the survey can illuminate when the intention of specific questions may be ambiguous or unclear.

It can also give you insight into the overall experience of taking your survey. Testing and piloting can give you information on how long the survey takes and whether the instructions are clear. You should also check whether the experience of taking the survey works on mobile devices for accessibility purposes.

You should also check with how the survey has been coded into Qualtrics of your other survey software. Ensure that all necessary questions are revealed at appropriate times. You should also check that filtering and hiding questions is working as intended.

Ways to Test Your Survey

1. **Have someone read the survey** and provide comments on questions and the overall flow of the survey.
2. **Test your survey verbally.** Ask people the questions and have them talk through their answering process of a question and how they understand the question and their process for answering.
3. **Test the survey once it has been programmed** by having people (including yourself!) test the different pathways for the survey with fake data to make sure they all work properly. (Make sure you can clearly identify test responses from real response!)

4. **Piloting the survey** with a small sample of respondents (5-10) and give them a textbox to share their experience with taking the survey. Export your data to see if there are any issues with how the data looks in your data analysis software to make sure your data is usable.

Once you have tested your survey, implement any changes and give it one more look over before fully launching. It might seem like a lot of work, but it is easier to test your survey before collecting data than it is to deal with bad quality or incomplete data after the fact.