

SURVEY QUESTION DESIGN

Note. Some of these questions do not have obviously or objectively correct answers. For both your sake and mine, do not write long wordy answers; concise answers focusing on the basic points will suffice.

1. You may be surprised to learn that in the late 1990s the U.S. government was running large budget surpluses, and the question arose as to what to do with this money. Which of the following survey questions do you think would indicate greater support for using the money for tax cuts? Briefly explain your answer.
 - (a) *Should the money be used for a tax cut, or should it be used to fund new government programs?*
 - (b) *Should the money be used for a tax cut, or should it be spent on programs for education, the environment, health care, crime-fighting and military defense?*

2. About a decade ago the question arose as to whether the United States should send troops to support the NATO mission in Kosovo (part of the former Yugoslavia). Which of the following survey questions do you think would indicate the greatest, and which the least, support for this option? Briefly explain your answer.
 - (a) *Are you in favor of or opposed to sending American troops to assist in the NATO mission in Kosovo?*
 - (b) *If President Clinton decides to send troops, would you favor or oppose sending American troops to assist in the NATO mission in Kosovo?*
 - (c) *Many American favor sending American troops to assist in the NATO in Kosovo. How about you? Do you favor or oppose sending American troops to assist in the NATO mission in Kosovo?*

3. Which version of this question do you think would indicate the most, and which the least, support for abridging freedom of speech? Briefly explain your answer.
 - (a) *Do you think the United States should forbid public speeches in favor of communism (or fascism, racism, etc.)?*
 - (b) *Do you think the United States should allow public speeches in favor of communism (or fascism, racism, etc.)?*

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4. In the Cold war, survey researchers sometimes asked these two questions, one right after the other in the questionnaire.
- (a) *Do you think the United States should let Communist newspaper reporters from other countries come in here and send back to their papers the news as they see it?*
 - (b) *Do you think a Communist country like Russia should let American newspaper reporters from other countries come in and send back to America papers the news as they see it?*

Do you think more people would answer question (a) positively if the two questions were asked in the order given above or if they were asked in the reverse order, i.e., first (b) and then (a)?

5. Comment on each of the following as a potential survey question. If you think any are unclear or slanted, restate them in better words.
- (a) *Does your family use food stamps?*
 - (b) *Which of the following best represents your opinion on gun control?*
 - (1) *The government should confiscate our guns*
 - (2) *We have the right to keep and bear arms*
 - (c) *In view of escalating environmental degradation and predictions of serious resource depletion, would you favor economic incentives for recycling of resource-intensive consumer goods?*
5. Here are three versions of the same general question:
- (a) *Do you think the government should provide more services in the areas of health and education?*
 - (b) *Some people think the government should provide fewer services even in such areas as health and education in order to reduce taxes and spending. Other people think the government should provide more services in these areas even if it means an increase in taxes and spending. Which is closer to the way you feel?*
 - (c) *Some people think the government should provide more services in the areas of health and education even if this means an increase in taxes and spending. Other people think the government should provide fewer services even in these areas in order to reduce taxes and spending. Which is closer to the way you feel?*

Which version of the question do you think would indicate the greatest, and which the least, apparent support for increasing the government's role in health and education?