



#### **Who Should Read This**

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- Enrollment Managers
- Admissions Directors and Leadership
- Campus Visit Directors and Coordinators
- Admissions Staff Members Serving Campus Visit Functions
- Admissions Staff Members Analyzing Campus Visit Data

# Post-Visit Survey **Best Practices**

A Guide to Creating Good Questions and Effectively  
Administering the Survey

# Enrollment Management Forum

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- Short research briefs and white papers
- Live webinars
- Expert takes on emerging issues
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# How to Use This Tool

## Create an Intentional Survey to Really Learn from Your Visitors

One of the main ways institutions learn about visitors' experiences and opinions is through a post-visit survey. A properly administered survey can shed light on a variety of important topics, starting with the things you directly ask about (e.g., the quality of the student ambassadors and other staff, a student's feelings about your institution after visiting, or the reason for visiting) and leading to the trends you can uncover (e.g., changes in what draws visitors to your campus, yield patterns, or consistency in the quality of your student ambassadors and staff).

The degree to which schools use surveys effectively to gain insight varies wildly, as do the format, length, and type of questions asked. Despite individual needs for surveys, there are key elements of a good survey that should be present. This tool is intended to provide necessary guidance to write a new survey from scratch or to revise an existing survey to better measure the information desired. It contains a four-step process for writing questions and an appendix resource with common question types.



### Step 1

#### Start by Thinking About the Answers

*Flip the normal workflow on its head to create a survey.*



### Step 2

#### Design the Survey Questions

*Build winning questions from what you want to find out.*



### Step 3

#### Determine the Best Survey Delivery Plan

*Evaluate the way you will gather responses.*



### Step 4

#### Pilot Test Your Questions

*Use a series of checks to best test new materials.*



### Appendix

#### Common Question Types

*A quick reference for the most common question types.*



This activity should take **45-60 minutes** to complete.

You will need this document, copies of post-visit surveys you have used in the last few years, and a list of desired outcomes to measure.

# Start by Thinking About the Answers

## Crafting the Best Survey Questions Means Knowing What You Want



Before writing a single question, you need to brainstorm the *answers* you want to get from visitors. It is easy to dive into the actual question writing without really knowing what the end goal is, but the best surveys are built from an understanding of the desired output.

### Draft Your Survey by Making Statements You Want to Be Able to Say

As you write these sentences, also start to consider the various ways you could ask a question to elicit the response you're hoping for. (You can make notes under each statement to help you as you move on to the next steps.) Reverse engineering the survey in this way helps you craft questions that focus exclusively on what you want to capture, eliminating confusion.

1. \_\_\_\_\_% of visitors plan to enroll after their visit today.
2. Visitors want to see \_\_\_\_\_ on the tour route, and they don't want to see \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The most impactful moment for the visitor was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was a negative experience the visitor had on campus today.
5. The quality of our student-led tours has been \_\_\_\_\_ over time.
6. Students came to our campus to visit because they \_\_\_\_\_.

# Design the Survey Questions

## Using Your Desired-Answer Brainstorm, Your Questions Should Flow Easily

Using your answer brainstorm from the previous step, begin to craft questions that would help you get at the information you want to have. There may be multiple formats that do this, so you will need to decide which version is best. You may want to consider the formats of other questions on your survey, the length of the survey, and the type of analysis you want to be able to do with the answers you receive. Below are some examples of the trade-offs between different question types that could inform the same statement brainstormed in Step 1.

Both examples below provide information about what additional areas of campus a visit would want to see (but did not). **Option 1** constrains the range of possibilities, but it will guarantee you can get clean comparisons between the major places listed in the question. **Option 2** allows for the greatest range of answers, but it could be difficult to analyze answers later.

### Option 1: Predetermined Choices

*Best option if you have answers in mind already and want to know about one.*

What did you want to see today that you didn't? (Choose any you like.)

- |              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| a. dorms     | d. classrooms       |
| b. labs      | e. football stadium |
| c. cafeteria | f. other _____      |

### Option 2: Free-Response Question

*Best option if you do not yet know what visitors want to say in response to this item.*

What part of campus did you want to see today that you didn't see?

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Both examples below provide information about the quality of your student tour guides. **Option 1** tells you only if more people feel quality is high, while **Option 2** would let you analyze if there is a positive trend (e.g., from "low" to "acceptable" would still be improvement) in quality.

### Option 1: Limited Change

*Best option if you want to simply show a simple trend over time.*

Thinking about my **student guide**, I feel that my tour was high-quality.

TRUE FALSE

### Option 2: Nuanced Change

*Best option if you want to see a more nuanced shift in trend over time.*

Thinking about my student guide, I feel that the tour was \_\_\_\_\_ quality.

low acceptable high very high

# Common Survey Question Pitfalls

## Don't Commit These Errors When Writing Your Surveys

Survey writers strive to avoid these question-design errors because they are prolific problems, and they make survey results inconsistent or unusable. In addition to being thoughtful about question order, you should understand these errors and use the quick check below to verify that your survey passes the test.

### Double-Barreled Question

*How would you rate the tour guides and the info session presenters that you saw today?*

#### The Problem

This question asks about two distinct things: the tour guides and the info session presenters. It is not possible to determine how the visitors felt about each one individually. What if they liked the guides but not the info session presenter?

### Missing Answer Choices

*What location did you like best? (a) dorms (b) stadium (c) cafeteria*

#### The Problem

This question is only acceptable if the tour went to exactly three places. You should take care to exhaustively list the options or offer an "other" category so your visitors aren't compelled to choose from an incomplete list when answering.

### Loaded Language

*You should have met a department leader today. How would you rate that interaction?*

#### The Problem

By using words like "should," "must," or even leading with phrases like "wouldn't you say..." you are signaling what answer you want, which can affect the answers you get. Write the survey to be neutral, and allow genuine responses.

### An Unbalanced Rating Scale

*Rate the tour guides: Pretty good – Great – Fantastic – Awesome – The Best Ever*

#### The Problem

The scale's center is "fantastic," and the worst possible answer is "pretty good." This captures falsely positive feedback and discourages people from sharing nonpositive experiences. Scales should handle the full range of possible answers.



#### Quick Check:

Make Sure You Avoided the Pitfalls

- ☐ Each question on the survey asks about only **one topic** at a time.
- ☐ **All** the possible answers a visitor might want are represented on the survey.
- ☐ The survey avoids normative words or loaded language that affects answers.
- ☐ Any rating scales used are wide enough to capture all kinds of experiences.
- ☐ The order of survey questions makes sense and is general to specific.

# Determine the Best Survey Delivery Plan

## Deciding the Best Way to Get the Right Information Is Critical

There are many different considerations that should inform the timing, manner, and possible rewards for your post-visit surveys. While the guidance below is far from exhaustive, it gives you some central considerations that will help you make the choices that best support your institutional goals.



### When You Should Deliver the Survey

*Do you ask for responses immediately or sometime later?*

While asking for the survey to be completed as one of the last steps on the visit day itself often leads to a higher survey response rate, the quality of these answers is not guaranteed. If your survey is more than five simple questions or if your survey has many free-response questions, you will likely get better responses if you let people complete the survey 24-72 hours later.

*An Interesting Approach*

Many have expressed that they wait to ask for responses until later that day because this allows visitors to have “car ride home” discussions, during which the gut impressions are tempered and more often reflect prospects’ true feelings post-visit.



### How You Should Deliver the Survey

*Is it better to go digital or paper-and-pen?*

We strongly recommend digital surveys that feed directly into your CRM. If this is not an option, then offer the survey in the easiest-to-complete way you can to encourage high response rates.

*An Interesting Approach*

It should not be a substitute for a formal survey, but adopting a Disney-style “listening post” approach can help you capture even more information. Have ambassadors and staff simply listen to the chatter as visitors leave (e.g., in the final room, in the parking lot) and report back any interesting comments your guests may have made as they left campus.



### What You Should Offer for Survey Completion

*Should you reward visitors for doing your survey?*

We recommend avoiding tying the survey to an immediate reward. For example, it is common to give away swag in exchange for handing in a survey. This incentivizes and reduces the quality of the information given because the survey stands in the way of leaving.

*An Interesting Approach*

Consider tying a reward to a future desired action that moves the student along the path to enrollment. For example, as a reward for completing the survey, pre-application visitors get application fee discounts or waivers, or admitted students who come to a spring event get a \$25 voucher to spend at the bookstore after enrolling at your institution in the fall.

# Pilot Test Your Questions

## Gauge the Robustness of Your Questions with Multiple Audiences

Even the most carefully crafted survey questions need to be tested. We recommend battle-testing your new questions in three phases to ensure they gather only the information you want and do so clearly and concisely.

**A**

### Internally Pilot Test Your Questions



Use the professional staff in your admissions office as the first line of testers. Have each participant scrutinize the survey while keeping these key questions in mind:

- Is there only one possible way to interpret the question, or is there something that is left open to interpretation?
- Can you imagine a way that the answer provided may not align with the type of information you want to collect?

**B**

### Focus Group the Survey with Your Student Ambassadors



After asking your staff to look at the survey, hand it to your next group of experts: your student ambassadors, guides, and work-study students. They are likely to have a slightly different take on the same questions, and they are closer in age and life experience to your target prospect market.

Ask them to consider the survey using the same two questions above, but also ask them what they would want to tell you that is not currently on the survey. They may have insight you didn't expect.

**C**

### Assess Your Survey in the Real World



Consider the first few times you use the survey as continued testing—if you are not sure about alternative wording, you can perform an A/B test (half of your visitors see one version, half see the other, and you compare the outcome) to make the final decision.

Testing the survey in the real environment also can be a chance to compare the new version against the prior version. You want to be getting better, more actionable information from your visitors.



# Common Types of Survey Questions

## Format Choices, from Most to Least Restrictive

This is a **non-exhaustive** list of question types that are typically used on post-visit and post-event surveys, arranged from the most restrictive to the least restrictive types. This can serve as a reference and a point of inspiration as you draft your own surveys.

### Dichotomous Choice Questions

These questions offer just two options, “yes/no” or “true/false,” usually. They are the most constrained.

**Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

I thought the info session was a good length.      TRUE    FALSE

The tour showed me everything I wanted.      TRUE    FALSE

I want to visit campus for another event.      TRUE    FALSE

**Did your guide encourage questions?**

Yes      No

### Discrete Choice Questions

These question types offer predefined choices to a respondent and limit the range of possible answers.

**Which parts of campus did you expect to see today? (Choose all that apply.)**

dorms/living spaces      classrooms

stadium/sports areas      library

science labs      other \_\_\_\_\_

**How many times have you been to visit?**

0 times    1 time    2 times    3+ times

### Rating or Scale Questions

These question types allow respondents to answer based on a defined range of possibilities.

**How well did each part of your tour go?**

	1	2	3	4	5
The info session	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The walking tour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The meet and greet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**How did today's visit compare to other schools' visits you have been on?**

worse      the same      better

### Free-Response Questions

These question types are often open-ended and leave space for the respondent to elaborate.

**Was there anything you wanted to see today that you did not get to see? (List as many things as you wish.)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**What do you still need to know or see before you would feel ready to choose EAB University?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Advisors to Our Work

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