

- Principle 1:** The strength of survey research is asking people about their firsthand experiences: what they have done, their current situations, their feelings and perceptions.
- Principle 1a:** Beware of asking about information that is only acquired *secondhand*.
  - Principle 1b:** Beware of hypothetical questions.
  - Principle 1c:** Beware of asking about causality.
  - Principle 1d:** Beware of asking respondents about solutions to complex problems.
- Principle 2:** Ask one question at a time.
- Principle 2a:** Avoid asking two questions at once.
  - Principle 2b:** Avoid questions that impose unwarranted assumptions.
  - Principle 2c:** Beware of questions that include hidden contingencies.
- Principle 3:** A survey question should be worded so that every respondent is answering the same question.
- Principle 3a:** To the extent possible, the words in questions should be chosen so that all respondents understand their meaning and all respondents have the same sense of what the meaning is.
  - Principle 3b:** To the extent that words or terms must be used that have meanings that are likely not to be shared, definitions should be provided to all respondents.
  - Principle 3c:** The time period referred to by a question should be unambiguous.
  - Principle 3d:** If what is to be covered is too complex to be included in a single question, ask multiple questions.
- Principle 4:** If a survey is to be interviewer administered, wording of the questions must constitute a complete and adequate script such that, when interviewers read the question as worded, respondents will be fully prepared to answer the question.
- Principle 4a:** If definitions are to be given, they should be given before the question itself is asked.
  - Principle 4b:** A question should end with the question itself. If there are response alternatives, they should constitute the final part of the question.
- Principle 5:** Clearly communicate to all respondents the kind of answer that constitutes an adequate answer to a question.
- Principle 5a:** Specify the number of responses to be given to questions for which more than one answer is possible.
- Principle 6:** Design survey instruments to make the task of reading questions, following instructions, and recording answers as easy as possible for interviewers and respondents.
- Principle 7:** Measurement will be better to the extent that people answering questions are oriented to the task in a consistent way.

**Figure 4.7.** Summary of Principles of Good Question Design