

# Pareto Principle Checklist for Question Design

## Problems to watch out for before testing the questionnaire.

1. PROBLEMS WITH READING: Determine whether it is difficult for the interviewers to read the question uniformly to all respondents.
  - 1a – WHAT TO READ: Interviewers may have difficulty determining what parts of the question are to be read.
  - 1b – MISSING INFORMATION: Information the interviewer needs to administer the question is not contained in the question.
  - 1c – HOW TO READ: Question is not fully scripted and therefore difficult to read.
2. PROBLEMS WITH INSTRUCTIONS: Look for problems with any introductions, instructions, or explanations from the respondent's point of view.
  - 2a – CONFLICTING OR INACCURATE INSTRUCTIONS, introductions, or explanations.
  - 2b – COMPLICATED INSTRUCTIONS, introductions, or explanations.
3. PROBLEMS WITH ITEM CLARITY: Identify problems related to communicating the intent or meaning of the question to the respondent.
  - 3a – WORDING: The question is lengthy, awkward, ungrammatical, or contains complicated syntax.
  - 3b – TECHNICAL TERMS are undefined, unclear, or complex.
  - 3c – VAGUE: The question is vague because there are multiple ways in which to interpret it or to determine what is to be included and excluded.
  - 3d – REFERENCE PERIODS are missing, not well specified, or are in conflict.
4. PROBLEMS WITH ASSUMPTIONS: Determine whether there are problems with assumptions made or the underlying logic.
  - 4a – INAPPROPRIATE ASSUMPTIONS are made about the respondent or his/her living situation.
  - 4b – ASSUMES CONSTANT behavior: The question inappropriately assumes a constant pattern of behavior or experience for situations that in fact vary.
  - 4c – DOUBLE-BARRELED question that contains multiple implicit questions.
5. PROBLEMS WITH KNOWLEDGE/MEMORY: Check whether respondents are likely to not know or have trouble remembering information.
  - 5a – KNOWLEDGE: The respondent is unlikely to know the answer.
  - 5b – An ATTITUDE that is asked about may not exist.
  - 5c – RECALL failure.
  - 5d – COMPUTATION or calculation problem.
6. PROBLEMS WITH SENSITIVITY/BIAS: Assess questions for sensitive nature or wording, and for bias.
  - 6a – SENSITIVE CONTENT: The question is on a topic that people will generally be uncomfortable talking about.
  - 6b – A SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE response is implied.
7. PROBLEMS WITH RESPONSE CATEGORIES: Assess the adequacy of the range of responses to be recorded.
  - 7a – OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS that are inappropriate or difficult.
  - 7b – MISMATCH between question and answer categories.
  - 7c – TECHNICAL TERMS are undefined, unclear, or complex
  - 7d – VAGUE response categories.
  - 7e – OVERLAPPING response categories.
  - 7f – MISSING response categories.
  - 7g – ILLOGICAL ORDER of response categories.

## Things to pay attention to when testing the questionnaire.

- Which items require respondents to think hard before they answer?
- What cognitive processes do they adopt to answer difficult questions?
- Which items seem to produce irritation, embarrassment, or confusion?
- Are there any items that respondents consider comical?
- Does the style of the question generate bias?
- Are the answers we get what we really want for the purpose of the study?
- Is there enough variability in the answers received?
- Are there local expressions that should be incorporated into the items to avoid ambiguity?
- Is the questionnaire too long?
- In the eye of the respondent, have any other important issues been overlooked in the questionnaire?