



## Questionable Survey Questions

### 1) What did you think of today's training?

Problem: Too vague; unclear what you are asking of respondents. You are likely to get a wide range of responses that are difficult to aggregate. Note that this kind of question could be OK if you want to give people an opportunity to give very open-ended feedback, but should probably be accompanied by more specific questions.

Revised Question:

How relevant was the content of today's training to you? How would you rate the length of today's training? Etc.

### 2) On a scale of 1 (very) to 5 (not at all), how informative and engaging were the training materials?

- 1 (very)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (not at all)

Problem: This is a "double-barreled" question that is asking two things at the same time. Respondents may feel differently about how informative the materials were and how engaging the materials were, and this question does not give them a chance to say that.

Revised Questions:

How informative did you find the training materials? AND

How engaging did you find the training materials?

### 3) Will you implement the new strategies that you learned today, or will you continue doing what you have always done?

- Implement new strategies
- Continue doing what you have done
- Don't know

Problem: This question is leading, in the sense that the wording strongly encourages people to say that they will implement the new strategies.

Revised Question:

How likely are you to implement the new strategies that you learned today? (Very likely/likely/somewhat likely/not at all likely)

4) On a scale of 1 (very) to 5 (not at all), how much has your AmeriCorps members' performance improved over the past year?

- 1 (very)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (not at all)

*Problem:* This question assumes that members' performance has either improved or has stayed the same; it ignores the possibility that their performance has gotten worse.

Revised Question:

How has your AmeriCorps members' performance changed over the past year?

- Improved a lot
- Improved a little
- Not changed
- Decreased a little
- Decreased a lot

5) How much do you agree with the following statement? "I submitted my last performance report on time."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

*Problem:* This is really a Yes/No question, so the response scale is not appropriate. This statement is either true or false, and therefore it is unclear what the difference between "strongly agree" and "agree" is, or what a response of "neither agree nor disagree" would mean.

Revised Question:

Did you submit your last performance report on time?

- Yes
- No

**6) Were the trainers knowledgeable about their subject matter?**

- Yes
- No

*Problem: This is not really a Yes/No question; respondents might well want to express an opinion somewhere in the middle of those two options. Respondents who had some concerns might feel that “No” is too harsh, and therefore would answer “Yes”—in which case the response data would completely hide their concerns.*

*Revised Question:*

*How knowledgeable were the trainers about their subject matter?*

- Very knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Not at all knowledgeable

**7) Please describe the ways in which this training improved your understanding of children’s reading needs.**

*Problem: This question assumes that the training did improve participants’ understanding, and therefore forces respondents to describe positive results even if they didn’t experience any. Remember that respondents will generally try to answer the questions they are asked, even if they don’t agree with assumptions made in the question.*

*Revised Questions:*

*Did this training improve your understanding of children’s reading needs? (Yes/No)*

*If so, please describe the ways in which it improved your understanding.*

**8) Was the length of this training appropriate?**

- Yes
- No

*Problem: This question will measure the percentage of people who thought the length was appropriate, but it will not tell you whether those people who answered “No” thought the training was too long or too short—which is an important piece of information.*

*Revised Question:*

*Was the length of this training appropriate?*

- Yes
- No, the training was too short.
- No, the training was too long.

9) If you work with rural populations, do you think the content of this training was relevant for that specific population?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*Problem:* This question is not ideal because it is unclear how people who do not work with rural populations should answer. Some may go ahead and answer Yes or No based on their opinion, some may answer Not Sure because they don't work with rural populations, and others may skip the question because they think that is what is expected. Whenever possible, try not to ask respondents questions that do not apply to them—and if it is impossible, make sure that people to whom the question doesn't apply know what to do.

Revised Question:

Do you work with rural populations? (Yes/No) If so, do you think the content of this training was relevant for that specific population? **OR**

Do you think the content of this training was relevant for rural populations? NOTE: IF YOU DO NOT WORK WITH RURAL POPULATIONS, PLEASE SKIP THIS QUESTION. **OR**

If you work with rural populations, do you think the content of this training was relevant for that specific population?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- I do not work with rural populations.

10) Which of the following do you think are important to our program? *Check all that apply.*

- Serving the needs of our clients
- Providing an enriching experience for our AmeriCorps members
- Making efficient use of our AmeriCorps funds
- Ensuring that our work aligns with our organization's mission

*Problem:* Respondents are very likely to check all of the boxes in this question—and therefore if the purpose of this question was to be able to draw some distinctions between these response options, it may not provide useful information.

Revised Question:

Which of the following do you think is most important to our program?

11) [For AmeriCorps members] After you complete your AmeriCorps service, how likely would you be to accept a job at an organization focused on environmental stewardship?

- Very likely
- Likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely

*Problem:* Respondents are likely to have difficulty answering this question, because their answer probably depends on many things that are not specified—for example, the location of the job, the salary, the exact position, etc. Because it is unclear what people will be thinking when they answer the question, it will be difficult to interpret the response data.

Revised Question:

Which of the following do you think is most important to our program?

12) Please rate the overall quality of this training on a scale of 1 to 5.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

*Problem:* The scale is unclear—is 1 the best, or is 5 the best? Because respondents may have different assumptions, it may be hard to interpret the data.

Revised Question:

Please rate the overall quality of this training on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is excellent and 5 is poor.

- 1 (excellent)
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 (poor)

OR

Please rate the overall quality of this training.

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor