Task #5
Write and Edit Items

Write and Edit Items

• Edit items drafted in step 3 to match response formats drafted in step 4 and vice versa
• Tips:
  – Use precise, clear, simple wording
  – Use sentence stems
  – Check items for ambiguity
  – Make items as specific as possible
  – Check for double-barreled items
  – Check for leading items that imply a desired answer
  – Check for emotionally loaded, vaguely defined, or overly general items
  – Check for abbreviations with which respondents may be unfamiliar
Critique Freshman Survey

• We designed the Old Dominion University Freshman Survey using these tips and principles to assess the noncognitive factors that are associated with academic difficulty and attrition
• How did we do?

Task #6
Determine Sequence of Items
Determine Sequence of Items

• Organize items to create a smooth flowing survey
• Group items into logically coherent sections with smooth transitions between sections

Tips:
– Begin with interesting items clearly connected to the goals of the survey
– Use a funnel approach asking broad general items followed by more specific items
– Make items independent so that answers do not affect each other
– Ask sensitive items after the beginning and before the end
– Ask objective items (“Have you participated in …?”) before subjective items (“How would you rate…?”)
– Put easy-to-answer items like demographics at the end (sets respondents’ minds at ease when they can see the connection between demographic items and other survey items)
Task #7
Determine Physical Characteristics of Survey

Determine Physical Characteristics of Survey

- Make survey look professional
  - Quality paper and printing
  - Booklets
  - Plenty of “white space” -- uncluttered
- Web-based surveys -- be careful when choosing colors, background, and graphics
- Length
  - Content is more important than length
  - Long enough to cover the content (answer the research questions) and no longer
  - KISS -- Keep It Short and Simple
    - Short in terms of response time
    - Simple in terms of effort required to complete it
Determine Physical Characteristics of Survey

- General format considerations
  - Use study title on first page
  - Include name, address, and phone number of researcher on survey and cover letter
  - Make survey appealing to the eye
  - Do not squeeze items onto the page
  - Do not use small fonts to get more items on the page
  - Provide brief clear instructions at beginning and each time they change
    - How should respondents mark their answers?
    - How many responses should they choose?
  - Survey should be self-explanatory as respondents will not read instructions
  - Locate response formats or places for answers close to the item (right of the item)

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Task #8
Review and Revise Survey

Review and Revise the Survey

- Take the survey yourself as if you were a member of the population
- Seek reviews from colleagues and supervisors
- Ask reading specialist to examine the reading level
- Ask someone who knows nothing about the topic to “idiot proof” it
Task #9
Pilot Test and Revise Survey

Pilot Test and Revise the Survey

• Pilot test
  – Invite group of potential respondents to a meeting
  – Administer the cover letter and survey
  – Time them
  – Collect surveys to test data analysis procedures
  – Distribute a clean copy and lead a discussion critiquing the survey section by section
• Pilot test BOTH the survey AND methodology by mailing it out to a sample or calling respondents on the phone
• Revise, Revise, Revise ..... 
• Pilot test again if there are significant changes
Task #10
Administer Survey

Administer the Survey

- Time – How long will it take to complete the survey?
- Timing – When is the best time of year or semester to administer the survey?
- Need 3-6 weeks
- Create timeline working backwards from when you need the results
- Through the mail, in a group, or over the phone?
- Follow-up at one-week intervals
  - Pre-notification postcard / e-mail
  - Cover letter and survey
  - Follow-up postcard / e-mail
  - Follow-up with second cover letter and survey
  - Follow-up by telephone
Administer the Survey

- Write an inviting cover letter
  - Personal communication -- ask them to help you
  - Briefly state the goal of the survey
  - Briefly state how they were selected and how many were selected
  - Tell them approximately how long it will take
  - Ask them to return their completed survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope
  - Tell them if their responses will be anonymous or confidential
  - Describe any incentives
  - Describe the benefits of responding to them
  - Offer to send them a copy of the results
  - Identify the name, address, and telephone number of the researcher they may contact with questions

Task #11
Analyze Data & Report Results
Analyze the Data and Report the Results

- Answer the research questions
- Computer analyses
  - Frequencies and means
  - Crosstabulations
  - Scales -- Factor analyses
- Qualitative analyses (open-ended)
  - Emerging themes and trends
- How will the data be reported?
  - Narrative report + tables
  - PowerPoint presentation
  - Executive summary
  - Different formats for different groups