

# Best Practice for Customer Satisfaction Surveys

*Follow these guidelines to increase the response rates to your online surveys.*

Measuring customer satisfaction on a regular basis is a core activity for any good business. The metrics provided give you valuable feedback, and trends can be monitored over a period of time. Our aim here is to give you tips on what to include in a good customer satisfaction feedback survey, how to draft it, what it looks like when built, and what the data analysis and reports can show you.

When writing the script for the survey, draft it as a Word or Excel document, which will help you spot any basic flaws in structure, conditionality and types of questions. We have scripted our survey in an Excel spreadsheet, taking care to phrase questions clearly and unambiguously, and providing answer lists that have a full range of options. (See the link below to download our spreadsheet in the Survey in Action section).

## Ten Great Tips on what to include in a Customer Satisfaction Survey

1. **Use standard list options:** There are standard lists of answers used widely in customer research for general rating (Excellent to Very Poor) and Satisfaction (Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied). Some researchers use 5-scale options (with a middle “50:50” option), while others do not allow respondents to sit on the fence, so only offer 4-scale option (e.g. Excellent, Good, Poor, Very Poor). Respondents therefore have to come down on one side or the other, though nuance of response can be lost.
2. **Use statements people can agree or disagree with:** It’s important to vary the types of question in a survey, so that respondents aren’t always being asked to make hard cold evaluations and factual responses. Include questions that ask them to say how they feel about things (see 4 below), or whether they agree/disagree with aspects of how you conduct business.
3. **Specify what your scales mean:** It is essential that you make clear what your scales mean in the wording of a question. If you are asking people to rate something on a scale of 1 to 10, don’t assume that they will know that 1 signifies the lowest on the scale and 10 the highest (they may, after all be thinking 1 represents 1st and 10 means 10th – quite a different evaluation!). So script the question to spell out what the scale mean. For example: “How would you rate them on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 = “Very poor” and 10 = “Excellent”?”
4. **Include subjective questions:** There are questions that need your head to do the work in order to answer them (objectivity is the key here), while others need your heart to answer

**Example Customer Satisfaction Survey**

4. Include subjective questions

How do you feel about the following types of food?  
Position the cursor on the line relative to how you feel about each cuisine. ANSWER REQUIRED

I Hate English Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love English Food
I Hate Italian Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Italian Food
I Hate French Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love French Food
I Hate Japanese Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Japanese Food
I Hate Chinese Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Chinese Food
I Hate Thai Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Thai Food
I Hate Spanish Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Spanish Food
I Hate Greek Food	<input type="range"/>	I Love Greek Food

You should click on or move the handle on each slider to indicate your answer to that row

< Previous      Survey 27% complete      Next >

them (a subjective response, saying how the respondent feels about things). We say use a mix of Head & Heart questions. It makes for better responses and more nuanced data.

5. **Use Gap Analysis questions – importance v fulfilment:** Gap analysis is a commonly used consumer satisfaction questioning technique. First, you ask how important certain aspects of your business are to respondents, then you separately ask how well you're doing in satisfying those same criteria. Values can be assigned to how well you're doing in both, and the gap between those values can be given a metric. You may be delivering great performance on things that don't matter to customers, while under-delivering on things that do matter! It could be business-saving feedback.
6. **Ascertain Net Promoter scores:** Another common questioning technique that is easy for respondents to answer, but which can provide a highly revealing metric. Ask them to say whether they'd recommend you (say, on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0=Never and 10=Always). By assigning values to their answers (give 10s and 9 a score of +1, ignore 8s and 7s, and give 6s and under a score of -1) you can determine an overall net metric of how your business is doing in terms of word of mouth.
7. **Get unprompted feedback:** Using write-in questions (also known as open ends or verbatims), you will be getting actual feedback from the cohort of respondents. This is called unprompted, because you're not giving them a list of possible answers (known as "prompts"). This will be very valuable data – it can confirm what you suspect, and it can tell you what you don't know). But be very judicious and discriminating in assessing this feedback – there could be rogue ideas being fed to you.
8. **Use ranking questions:** Listing a set of options and asking respondents to rank their top choices (you can vary the number easily in Demographix) can get great data. We apply a special ranking algorithm to these questions in our analysis report that weights the data so that emphasis is given to those that are ranked more frequently, not just those that are most frequently listed first or second.
9. **What one thing can we do better?** This is the best question you can ask in a customer satisfaction survey. "If there was only one thing we could change, what is it?" It goes to the heart of what is top of their mind and bugging them the most.
10. **Core demographic questions to analyse data:** At the end of the survey you will want to ask some core demographic questions (gender, age group, and maybe locality) so that you can filter and "cut" the data. We suggest you make these compulsory as they do not contain private data, and you want all respondents to be categorised according to these factors.

## Now look at the script in action in a real survey:

- Download the script in the Excel spreadsheet original:  
[https://www.demographix.com/downloads/Demographix\\_Example\\_CSS\\_Survey\\_Script.xls](https://www.demographix.com/downloads/Demographix_Example_CSS_Survey_Script.xls)
- This is the same survey (scripted above) when deployed:  
<http://www.thissurvey.com/bestpractice>