Evaluating the Questionnaire: A Self-Assessment

Stages 1 through 7 led you through the steps of questionnaire construction. This checklist is intended for the developer to self-assess the quality of the instrument before formal validation occurs. Much time and energy can be saved if used before proceeding to Stage 8, instrument validation. Poorly written items, omissions, and superfluous content can be discovered in time to adjust with little effort.

Each questionnaire is unique, so some of the listings below may not apply to a particular project. Although most of the items will be relevant to all questionnaires, the researcher must identify which are relevant on a case-by-case basis.

1. General

_____ Is the form pleasant to look at?

_____ Is spacing appropriate?

_____Are like items grouped together?

_____ Are scales or choice alternatives reprinted on carry-over pages or repeated often enough to be visible at every scroll of the screen?

_____ Is the questionnaire appropriately titled?

_____ Will the form take 10 minutes or less to complete?

_____ Is the use of font sizes, underlining, bold print, and the like done well?

_____ Is the first question engaging, answerable by all, and simple?

2. Questionnaire Content

_____ Is the questionnaire based on the guiding questions?

_____ Have "fuzzy" terms in the questions been clarified/operationalized?

_____ Was an alignment check done?

_____ Have unnecessary items been eliminated?

3. Introduction

_____ Is the questionnaire introduced well, either by a separate letter or as part of the questionnaire itself?

_____ If you were to read the introduction, would you want to complete the questionnaire?

_____ Does the introduction address . . .
         ___ The purpose of the form?
         ___ The importance of completing the form?
         ___ How long it will take to complete the questionnaire?
         ___ Confidentiality?
         ___ What will be done with the results?

4. Directions

_____ Are the directions simply written?

_____ Is there a different set of directions for each format change?

_____ Have significant points been emphasized (but not overemphasized)?

_____ Do respondents know what to do with a completed questionnaire?

Place a check mark in each box where the questionnaire item meets the criterion.

Criterion[a]	Item Number													
1. Simple construction and word order														
2. Common, well-defined terminology; **no jargon**														
3. Asks only what respondent knows														
4. Respondents not led; no "hard" or "soft" terminology														
5. No compound questions														
6. Sensitive questions carefully worded; self-indictment avoided														
7. Negative responses can be interpreted														
Scalar Response Items														
8. Scale descriptors fit item (especially important)														
9. Equal intervals between choices, semantically and spatially														
10. "Undecided" response kept off the scale														
11. No absolutes (e.g., use of the words, *all* or *never*)														
12. No double qualifiers (use of qualifiers in both the item and the response)														

[a] See Stage 3 for clarification of criteria.

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