Fix this survey

The Survey

The following survey is part of the Human Computer Interaction course at the University of Edinburgh. The goal of this survey is to get you thinking about how people interpret different question wordings. No data will be collected or retained from this survey other than what you voluntarily share with people in your tutorial.

Questions in this survey are intentionally somewhat random. Each question should make sense on its own, or in the context of nearby questions, but the survey has no overall research goal.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other

☐ Prefer not to say

Instructor Opinion: Well phrased question. The question is clear and the options are reasonable for most general audiences providing both an other and "prefer not to say" allows those with gender identies beyond male and female to be able to select a choice that represents them.

2. How old are you?

Instructor Opinion: Ok question, though it could be phrased a bit clearer. Most people will understand that the question is asking how many years old they are and the length of the line below also indicates a short answer such as an integer or year of birth.

A somewhat clearer question would have been "How many years old are you?" or "I am _____ years old."

3. What is your current degree level?
☐ Undergraduate   ☐ Masters   ☐ PhD   ☐ PostDoc
☐ Other:_____

Instructor Opinion: Confusing question. Some people will interpret the question as "What degree are you currently in school to obtain?" and some will interpret it as "What is the highest degree you have obtained?"

The answers are also problematic. "PostDoc" is not a degree. If the question is asking what degree the participant currently holds, then the answers "none", "high school diploma" and "some university" would also be appropriate to add. The "other" option is ok here, though it is potentially problematic as it allows people to write whatever they would like for a question which has a very small number of potential answers likely resulting in data that is useless.

4. What do you study?

Instructor Opinion: Unclear question. Some people will interpret the question as "What is the name of your current degree program?" and others will interpret it as "What type of degree are you getting?" Others will interpret it closer to "What subject area are you most interested in at school?"

There is also a problem with ability to answer. A PhD student may find it challenging to answer such a question in the space permitted as what they study is quite complex. A teacher or tutor may also have difficulty answering the question as they are teaching not studying.

The answer space is well planned and appropriate. It hints to the respondant that they should provide an answer which is at most only a few words long.

5. **What kinds of computing devices do you typically use? (Select all that apply.)**

   ☐ Desktop computers

   ☐ Laptop computers

   ☐ Smart phones (e.g. iPhone, Android)

   ☐ Smart watches

   ☐ Tablets (e.g. iPad)

   ☐ Game consoles (e.g. Wii, Xbox, PS4)

   ☐ Other _____

Instructor Opinion: Clear question. The question text is clear and the only jargon is "computing devices" which is made clear in the answer options. The question could be mildly improved by providing a time frame, such as "What kinds of computing devices have you used in the last two months?" Though, the time frame is not necessary.

The answer options also make sense and having an "other" option is good here as it is challenging to think of every possible type of computing device up-front. The inclusion of "Game Consoles" also hints to the participant that the survey author is interested in all types of computing devices not just traditional computers.

6. **What type of OS do you use in your everyday Desktop/Laptop machine? (check all that apply)**

   ☐ Windows

   ☐ Linux

   ☐ Mac OS X

   ☐ BSD or other *nix like

Instructor Opinion: Use of jargon. Many people do not know that "OS" stands for "Operating System" and will be confused by this question. A better question might be: "For the Laptop or Desktop you use the most often, what Operating System does it have?"

The question also has an ability to answer problem as some percentage of the population are not able to identify the difference between a Windows and Mac computer. Those people will find this question challenging to answer and are likely to guess or lie when answering. An improvement would be to add more hints in the answers. For example changing "Windows" to "Microsoft Windows" which gives people more clues.

Answers here are also problematic. Most people will not know what "Linux" is and even less will know what "BSD or other *nix like" means. The answers need to be changed to include the full names with the company names included. Unless it is important, the last option about BSD should be removed and instead an "other" option should be added.

7. **What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow?**

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Instructor Opinion: This question is actually a famous quote from a Monty Python movie. In the movie the question is asked several times and the characters learn to answer by instead asking: "African or European".

If the goal of the question is to see how many survey respondents are Monty Python fans, then it is a reasonable question and well phrased. The length of the answer space is a bit problematic, but Monty Python fans will likely recognize it as a trick and answer correctly anyway.

The only real problem with the question is that it will likely frustrate some respondents who do not know how to answer it.

Social Media Use

8. Have you heard of SnapChat before?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Instructor Opinion: Ok question with a clear set of answers.

9. If you selected Yes, please give details?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instructor Opinion: Nonsensical question. This question would need to be completely rewritten as it violates nearly every question.

A better question might be "In what context have you heard of SnapChat before?" with options like: "I use it", "My friend uses it", "I've seen other people use it", "I have heard about it in the news".

Technical Knowledge

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

10a. I often ask others for help with the computer
Strongly Disagree ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Strongly Agree

10b. Others often ask me for help with the computer
Strongly Disagree ☐—☐—☐—☐—☐ Strongly Agree

Instructor Opinion: Well written question. The question is clear with no jargon, the answers all make sense.

11. Below this question is a URL, please circle the part of the URL that best explains where it would go if you were to type it into a web browser.

https://facebook.com/twitter.com

Instructor Opinion: Potentially confusing question. The term "URL" may not be understandable to everyone taking the survey, many of whome may not not even realize that the bar at the top of the web browser can be used for anything other than Google. Similarly "where it would go" is both ambiguious and difficult to understand for similar reasons.

The answer is also somewhat unclear. "Circle" is a good statement it is clear what the user needs to do. The "part of the URL" is a bit less clear. This type of answer option will result in a high level of interpretation by the participants. That can be good if this is an exploritory study where we are testing how people interpret the words "part of the URL", as we will see all the ways the URL could be misinterpreted. However, this wording is problematic if we are trying to do any sort of comparision across users as they will not all interpret the question or answer the same way.

A better option might be to change this question to multiple choice and provide a list of possible places this URL could go. The question would then change to something like: "In your opinion, if you were to type the following link into a web browser, what website would open?" Followed by answer options like: "Facebook's main webpage", "Twitter's main webpage", and "Some other webpage".

Reaction to Kittens

Looking at this kitten makes me feel:

12a. Calm		☐ Not at all ☐ Somewhat ☐ Extremely
12b. Afraid		☐ Not at all ☐ Somewhat ☐ Extremely
12c. Happy		☐ Not at all ☐ Somewhat ☐ Extremely

12d. Sad ☐ Not at all ☐ Somewhat ☐ Extremely

Instructor Opinion: Reasonable question and answers.

Looking at this kitten makes me feel:
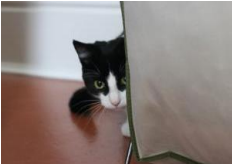
13a.	Calm	☐—☐—☐—☐—☐	Afraid
13b.	Happy	☐—☐—☐—☐—☐	Sad
13c.	Energetic	☐—☐—☐—☐—☐	Sleepy
13d.	Green	☐—☐—☐—☐—☐	Red

Instructor Opinion: Reasonable question. The last answer is problematic since "Green" and "Red" are not usually associated with "feel". The two obvious fixes are to either remove them, or replace them with a new emotion word pairing like "Content" and "Worried".