

Solicit Information

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about different methods for gathering information on your audience. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Collecting Information About Your Particular Audience
2. Direct Observation
3. Interviews
4. Questionnaires
5. Likert-Type Testing of Attitudes and Opinions
6. Tips for Speakers

1. Collecting Information About Your Particular Audience

So how do you go about collecting information about your particular audience?

There are several useful methods to consider, including:

- Direct observation of members of the potential audience
- Data collection through interviews surveys
- Rating scales for opinions

2. Direct Observation

Direct observation allows you to get to know the members of your audience personally. You are making observations of audience members through your own senses such as hearing, sight and perhaps smell.

You can employ this method in a classroom or small group situation through conversations with others and by listening to what they say.

However, you will want to guard against introducing your own egocentric biases into the observation. Our human senses do not function like a video camcorder, impartially recording all observations.

Thus, two people can view the same audience and come away with entirely different perceptions of it, even disagreeing about simple facts. This is why eyewitness testimony is notoriously unreliable.

3. Interviews

An interview is a conversation between two people - the interviewer and the interviewee - that involves asking questions to obtain information.

Generally, you will be using the four different types of questions which follow:

Open-ended questions: Questions that ask who, what, where, when, why, and how are generally good open-ended questions. An open-ended question requires the respondent to reply with more information than a "yes" or "no" answer.

➞ **EXAMPLE** "Tell me about what kind of music you listen to" will probably get you a lot more information than "Do you like to listen to death metal? " This will only require "yes" or "no."

Closed questions: When you need a "yes" or "no" answer or when you want the other person to provide you with a specific answer from among a set of choices, use closed questions. Closed means that you only have specific options, and no other choices. "Do you spend more time texting at home, work or school? " is a closed question with three choices.

Probe for more information: After a respondent answers a question, you can probe to get clarification or more information. By asking "probing" questions you can tailor the interview, as it is occurring.

Mirror questions: reflect the previous content back to the interviewee. A mirror question can be used to probe for more information or to provide a summary for the interviewee to agree, correct or expand upon.



HINT

Avoid leading questions. A leading question is one that virtually guarantees that the interviewee will reply with a desired answer. For example, "Wouldn't you prefer X?" indicates what *you* want the interviewee to prefer. You do not find out what the interviewee really thinks.



For large audiences, you could use **computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI)**.



TERM TO KNOW

Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing

An Internet surveying technique in which the interviewer follows a script provided in a website. The questionnaires are made in a program for creating web interviews. The program is able to customize the flow of the questionnaire based on the answers provided, as well as information already known about the participant.

4. Questionnaires

The basic **questionnaire** is a survey consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.

Questionnaires have advantages over other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You might have a question with easy scorable multiple choice answers such as:

What is your marital status?

1. Single
2. Married
3. Divorced
4. Partnered



TERM TO KNOW

Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a type of survey consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.

5. Likert-Type Testing of Attitudes and Opinions

Do you want to find out if members of the audience share the same attitudes or agree or disagree with your thesis? You can use a Likert-type **rating scale** of attitudes.

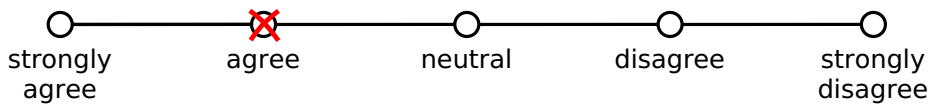
A Likert item is simply a statement which the respondent is asked to evaluate according to any kind of objective criteria; generally the level of agreement or disagreement is measured. Often five ordered response levels are used.

Look at the Likert Scale in the example below to see the format of the typical five-level Likert item which is:

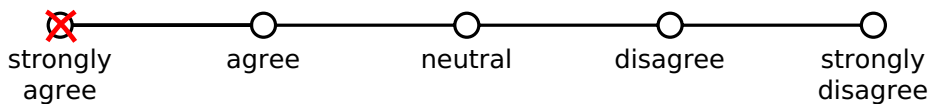
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

Example Likert Scale

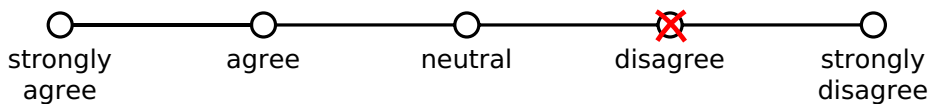
1. Wikipedia has a user friendly interface.



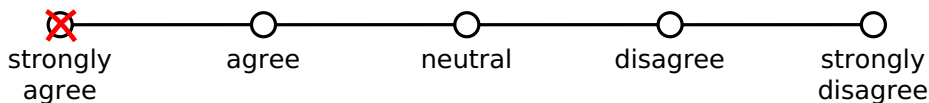
2. Wikipedia is usually my first resource for rese



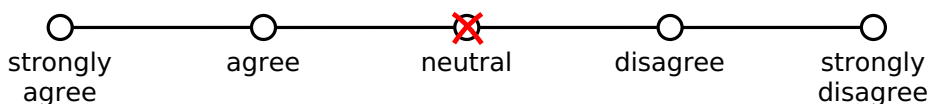
3. Wikipedia pages generally have good images



4. Wikipedia allows users to upload pictures eas



5. Wikipedia has a pleasing color scheme.



TERM TO KNOW

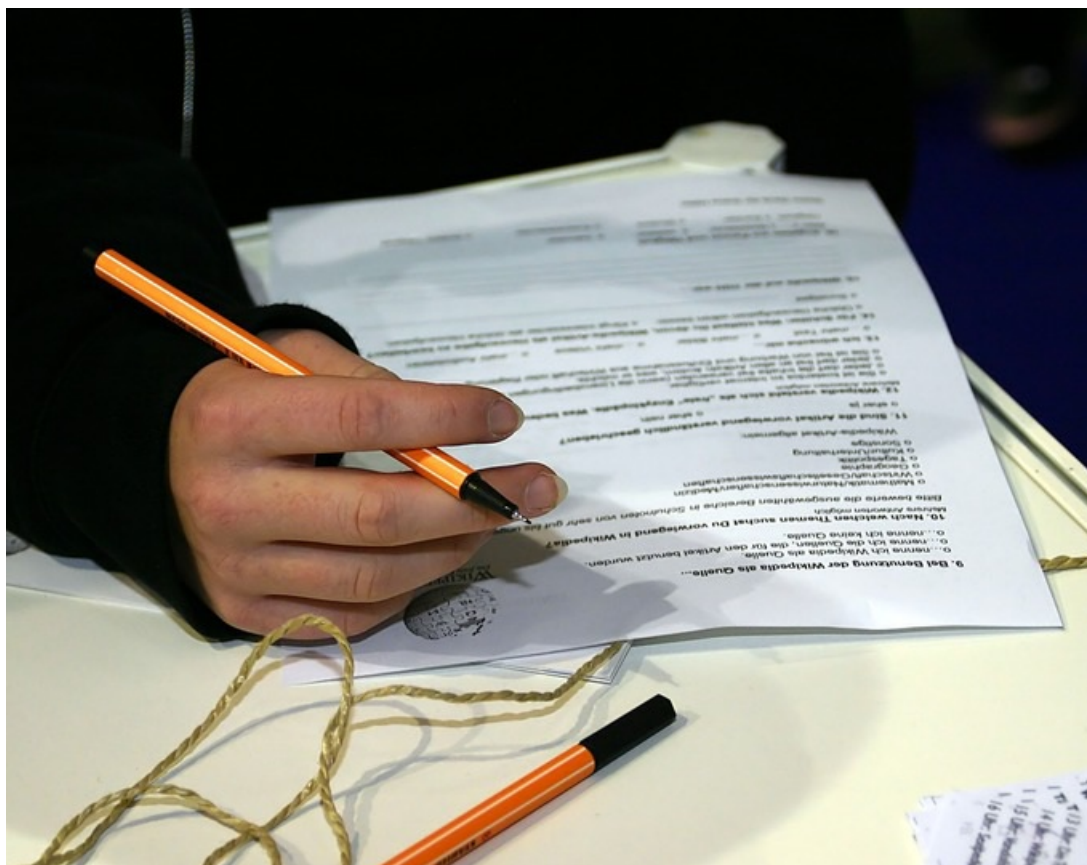
Rating Scale

A rating scale is a set of categories designed to elicit information about an attribute. In the social sciences, common examples are the Likert scale and 1-10 rating scales in which a person selects the number which is considered to reflect the perceived quality of a product.

6. Tips for Speakers

When interviewing, remember to allow the interviewee time to respond to your question without interrupting. Also, leave a few brief pauses between one question and the next so the interviewee can supply additional information.

Or, probe before moving on to the next question. Usually you want to prepare a list of questions in advance and move from more general to specific questions.



When using a questionnaire or using rating scales, it is wise to try them out on a small sample of your audience before you administer them to a large group. You can use the small sample to make sure that everyone understands the meaning of the questions and that you are getting useful information.

You can collect the data directly or you can use computer-assisted web based surveys or interviewing questionnaires.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned different ways for **collecting information about your particular audience**. **Direct observation** allows you to get to know the members of the audience personally by using your own senses such as hearing, sight, and perhaps smell. An **interview** is a conversation between two people (the interviewer and the interviewee) for obtaining information by asking open, closed, mirror and probing questions. The basic **questionnaire** is a survey consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents in your audience. Use a **Likert-type rating scale of attitudes** to find out how strongly the audience agrees or disagrees with your thesis. An important **tip for speakers** is to try out questionnaires or rating scales on a small group first to ensure you are gathering useful data.

Source: Source: Boundless. "Solicit Information." Boundless Communications Boundless, 3 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 1 Jul. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/analyzing-the-audience-7/adapting-to-your-audience-40/solicit-information-175->



TERMS TO KNOW

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