

# THE SURVEY PROJECT

## GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT GROUPS

### A. Selecting a problem or topic to investigate

The selection of a problem or topic to investigate is the first IMPORTANT decision the group has to make. You should select something that the group is interested in personally and something that offers you the chance to create a solid HYPOTHESIS. As well, you need to choose a topic all group members feel comfortable with, since all members will individually have to administer the survey to others. Keep in mind the fact that the finished survey is going to be administered to other high school students. Try to select a topic that students will likely be able to give you informed answers on.

If you choose to select a controversial topic like alcohol, drugs, or sexual behaviour, you will have to be EXTRA careful that your survey is well designed. If not, you will get a bunch of "silly" answers and you will have nothing of value to analyze. At that point, it would be too late to start over.

### B. Designing a hypothesis

Once you have settled on a problem to investigate, the group needs to design a workable hypothesis. A workable hypothesis is a statement that the information gathered will either prove or disprove. It should never be something we already know to be true, e.g., females in high school spend more money on makeup than males. Nor should it be something you cannot gather useful information about, e.g., most students will buy a new car when they graduate.

### C. Developing your questionnaire

At the top of your survey, collect information about the GRADE, AGE, or SEX of the individual completing the survey. You may decide to analyze your data for gender or age differences.

Ideally, you should have six to ten GOOD questions that deal with the problem you are investigating. The advantage to asking more questions is that, if it turns out you are not able to prove your hypothesis, you will likely have at least some other useful information that you can draw conclusions about.

#### Some general tips

1. Try to avoid questions that can be answered yes or no. Questions which offer a range of answers will give you more information to work with.

Weak question: "In the past two months, have you purchased a CD?"  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Better question: "How many CDs have you purchased in the past two months?"

- (a) None                      (b) 1-3                      (c) 4-6                      (d) 7+

2. Questions that are open-ended should be used sparingly or not at all. The main reason is that they are difficult to analyze. In the example below, there are numerous possible answers which the group would divide into categories and analyze after the survey had been administered. This is very time consuming and sometimes difficult to do.

Open-ended question: "What don't you like about school?"

3. Ranking questions are also a little more difficult to analyze but they DO provide a lot of useful information.

For example: "Examine the list of leisure activities below and rank them '1' to '5' according to your own preferences. With '1' being the activity you like the most."

Watching TV	_____	Going shopping	_____
Hanging out with friends	_____	Going to a movie	_____
Reading a book	_____		

4. Avoid "leading" questions. These are questions that indicate YOUR thoughts and feelings and therefore take the interviewee in a certain direction. These questions are biased and must be reworked.

For example: "Fanatical 'pro lifers' believe abortions should never be allowed in any circumstances. Do you agree with these fanatics? Why or why not?"

5. Whenever possible, ask questions that deal with BEHAVIOUR rather than OPINION. Past behaviour is a more reliable measure of future behaviour than opinion is. We might THINK we'd behave a certain way under certain conditions but we don't really know until we are placed in that situation.

Weak question: "If you had just broken up with a boyfriend/girlfriend and felt that you had no friends is there a possibility you'd consider suicide?"

Better question: "Do you know anyone, including yourself, that has ever considered suicide?" Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

"If yes, place a check mark beside any of the following factors that played a factor in that person's decision to attempt/commit suicide."

Relationship problems	_____	Academic problems	_____
Unwanted pregnancy	_____	Family problems	_____
Loss of employment	_____	Financial problems	_____

6. Avoid "double questions." In these questions, two questions are tied together, making them impossible to answer.

"Do you have a summer job or a part-time job during the school year?"  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

## THE SURVEY PROJECT: FINAL PRODUCTS

### Part A: The Bristol Board Display

The group must create a display which includes the following items:

1. The PROBLEM and HYPOTHESIS at the top of the display board.
2. A clean copy of the SURVEY that was used to gather data.
3. The ANALYSIS sheets that were used analyze the data.
4. The CONCLUSION(S) which the group reached about their Hypothesis.
5. The FOLLOW-UP questions which were part of the project wrap-up.
6. At least two different GRAPHS, each neatly done, coloured, and properly labelled. The graphs should be based on TWO questions which can be well represented in graph form.

### Part B: The Presentation

Components of the presentation

1. The Hypothesis the group was trying to prove.
2. The classes which the group actually surveyed.
3. An overview of the entire data gathered.
4. A selection of the questions that the group asked on their survey, and the results that they came up with. (Use 3 or 4 of your better questions.)
5. What did you find out. Did you prove the Hypothesis? What other interesting information did you find out?
6. Identify any unusual or interesting problems you had with the survey, the classes, or the analysis of the survey. Did you make any mistakes?
7. What changes would you make if you studied this problem again?

### THE SURVEY: "CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP EXERCISE"

This sheet provides a GUIDELINE for this part of the Finished Product, which is included in the Bristle Board Display.

ON A SEPARATE SHEET(S) OF PAPER, complete the following:

1. Explain whether you were able to prove your HYPOTHESIS correct.
2. Outline what information you did "discover", regardless of whether or not you proved the Hypothesis. This should be in sentence form and about one-half to three-quarters of a page in length.
3. Select two questions in your survey which could have been improved, or replaced with better questions. Set up an ORGANIZER like the one below and complete it, using the suggested headings. An example has been included to show you how it could be set up.

Original Question	Problem(s) with the question	The "NEW" or improved question
1. Do you like orange juice for breakfast?  Yes _____  No _____	Not specific enough. Does the person ever actually drink orange juice? If so, how often.	1. How often do you have juice for breakfast?  a) regularly _____ b) sometimes _____ c) never _____

4. In a short paragraph, 5 to 7 sentences, explain what problems or difficulties your group had completing the surveys. (e.g., classes, absentees in group, question difficulties, etc.)
5. Explain what you should do DIFFERENTLY, if you were going to do the survey over again – and why!!