

# Guidelines for accessible surveys and forms

Making online surveys accessible can be tricky. Readers may have disabilities that, depending on how you've designed the survey, may make it hard for them to access or complete it. These tips can help you create surveys that everyone can participate in. And respondents will appreciate a survey that's easy-to-understand and easy-to-navigate.

## In the beginning

- Clearly state what the survey is about.
- Say how many questions there are, or use a progress indicator.
- Allow people to save and return to the survey, especially if it's long.

## Language

- Use clear and simple language. Keep sentences short. Reject jargon.
- Make section categories to organize content.
- Use bulleted lists to break up text.
- Spell out acronyms the first time, e.g., "purchase order (PO)."

## Rankings

- When asking readers to rank items, use words rather than numbers as the scale. Too often, people need to repeatedly refer to the legend. It gets confusing for everyone and especially screenreader users.
  - **Good example:**
    - Question: Rate your coffee
    - Answer: hot, tepid, cold
  - **Bad example:**
    - Question: Rate your coffee
    - Answer: 1, 2, 3 (1=hot, 2=tepid, 3=cold)

## Buttons and boxes

- Decide how many response options people can select. If only one, use radio buttons. If more than one, use checkboxes.
- Make sure that radio buttons are right next to the label.

## Negative answers

- Avoid posing questions in the negative so that the reader has to answer "yes" to confirm a negative. It's confusing.
  - **Good example:** Do you support motherhood and apple pie?

- **Bad example:** Are you opposed to freedom of speech?

## Multiple choices

For questions with only a couple of multiple choice answers, a horizontal layout is probably fine.

### Example:

Question: Which cat breed do you like best? Answer: Burmese, Manx, Persian

Question: Are you a genius? Answer: Yes, No

For questions with many multiple choice answers, a vertical layout is better.

Question. Which dog breed do you like best?

- Akita
- Beagle
- Chihuahua
- Dalmatian
- Poodle
- Rottweiler
- Shiba Inu

## Tables

Grids or tables are difficult for screenreader users to navigate. Complex tables with many rows and columns of questions and answers are difficult for anyone.

Rather than formatting questions in tables, separate out the questions. Have readers answer each question individually.

- **Good example:**
  - Question: Do you like cake? Answer: Yes, No
  - Question: Is your house blue? Answer: Yes, No
- **Bad example:**
  - Do you like cake?
  - Do you eat salt?
  - Are you tall?
  - Can you read?
  - Is your house blue?
  - Do you drive?
  - Do you swim?
  - Do you speak German?
  - Etc.

## Keyboard controls

- Make sure readers can use the tab key to move between questions and between answers, as with any accessible form. Not everyone can use a mouse.

## Images

- If using an image as part of the question or answer, provide a text equivalent (alt attribute, transcript, etc.) so screenreader users can interpret it.

## Color and font

- Provide clear color contrast between the text and background.
- Don't use color alone to convey meaning, such as a red "stop" button and a green "go" button. Also use text.
- Ensure readers are able to increase the font size themselves.

## Confirmation page

- Don't forget to make sure the completion or thank you page is also accessible.

## Test

- Do a dry run of the survey with a variety of readers.
- Ask the IT department to test the survey for accessibility.

## SURVEY TOOLS

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- [Accessify](#) (free): This site offers tools that help in building accessible websites, including an accessible form builder, table builder, and pop-up generator.
- [SurveyGizmo](#): SurveyGizmo claims that its survey tool meets accessibility standards.
- [Google Forms](#) (free): Google Forms provides an accessible option for surveys and forms.

## ACCESSIBILITY TOOLS

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- [Captioning tools](#)
- [Color analyzers](#)
- [Manual testing](#)
- [Survey tools](#)
- [Testing tools](#)
- [Web developer tools](#)

## RELATED RESOURCES

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