Leading Practices: Requiring Questions

We have some pretty strong opinions when it comes to requiring questions. Below we'll discuss some leading practice tips for requiring survey questions. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. Let us know if you think we missed something!

To Require or Not To Require?

As a general rule, we're not fans of required questions in surveys. We believe that you should only be asking questions for which you really need the data. By requiring some questions and leaving others unrequired you're effectively telling a respondent "This question is not important." To which the respondent will probably wonder "Why include it in the survey?"

In addition, require settings, even the icon itself, can be fatiguing and possibly frustrating for your respondents.

If you do choose to use require settings we recommend following the below tips.

Do Not Remove Required Icons

Communication in your surveys is key to keeping your respondents engaged. Survey features like page titles and descriptions and progress bars help respondents to orient themselves. Required icons are another way of communicating with your respondents. If you require a question, it is good form to let your respondents know it is required. The error messages that required questions throw can be can be pretty frustrating. If you remove the required asterisk you are removing the cue a respondent needs to prevent error messages from popping up.

In addition, the required asterisk is needed for accessibility as these icons are what screen readers use to indicate to a sight-impaired respondent that the question is required.

Add Opt-Out Answer Options to Required Questions

If you require a question you must have an answer option for everyone; otherwise, you risk collecting bad data. If you are not 100% sure that your list of answer options will apply to all survey respondents, add an opt-out answer option such as other, none of the above, not applicable. Check out our Answer Option Special Settings Tutorial to learn how to set this up!

What is your favorite color?

○ Red

○ Yellow

○ Green

○ Blue

○ Other

Ensure Opt-Out Answer Options Are Exclusive

Whenever you provide opt-out answer options, such as None of the Above and NA, make sure that they are exclusive, meaning, they cannot be selected in combination with other options. Using our Answer Option Special Settings this is is easy to do! See the below example where selecting None of the above makes the other answer options unselectable.

Which locations have you visited?

- ☐ Boulder
- ☐ Denver
- ☐ Steamboat Springs
- ☐ Ft Collins
- ☑ None of the above

Avoid the Soft-Required Setting

Customers asked for it. We built it, but we discourage using it. The soft-required setting does not provide your respondents with required information in advance. As we discussed above, error messages are frustrating. The only thing more frustrating is an error message that respondent didn't have enough information to prevent.

Provide Respondents with Details About Your Require Settings

The variations of require settings you can set up in SurveyGizmo are infinite. If you are using specific require settings like a minimum number of answers per grid row, it is always a good idea to provide your survey respondents with instructions with details of your required settings, as opposed to letting the validation error display after they try to submit the page. This will reduce fatigue and frustration among your respondents! Check out our tutorial on Adding Instructions to Your Questions to learn how to set this up!

1. What is your favorite movie in the following genres?
Please provide a response to each movie genre.

Drama	
Comedy	
Foreign	
Western	

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