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(please note, some of the links and prices contained in this document may be outdated)*

## **Resources and Tips for Conducting Online Surveys**

By Marilyn Dickey

Choosing a site to do a Web survey can be a matter of trial and error. Fortunately, though, most sites make that process easy by allowing free trials — usually either by offering access for a fixed period at no cost or by providing the service for very small surveys without charge.

Most sites charge for a period of time — a month, a quarter, a year — and allow unlimited surveys during that period, and some offer discounts for nonprofit organizations. The sites that provide their services free often limit the offerings in some way: They may cap the number of questions or the number of respondents, offer only limited technology support or none at all, make the data available online for only a short period of time, or not allow the poll results to be downloaded to the user's computer.

In addition to the question of cost, David Fetterman, director of evaluation at Stanford University's School of Medicine, who frequently conducts surveys online and helps nonprofit clients conduct surveys, suggests considering the following issues before making a choice:

- Is the site easy to use? Are the instructions clear? (One way to test survey sites is to arrange a party or meeting by using an online questionnaire to allow people to choose among several available dates and times, Mr. Fetterman says.)
- Does the site offer question formats most suitable for the survey: multiple choice, yes or no, open-ended?
- Is this a Web-only survey, or does it require the questionnaire creator to download and maintain software?
- Is there a limit on the number of questions a survey can include, or on the number of respondents permitted?
- Is it possible to download the data to Excel or to a statistical program to do more tabulations?
- Does the program offer good visual presentations of the data it gathers — bar charts, pie charts, and so forth?
- Can the results be viewed on both Windows and Macintosh software? This is helpful to know if the results of the poll are to be visible to the respondents.
- Can the questionnaire be translated by a screen reader, for participants with visual disabilities?
- Are the sites designed so the same participant is unable to fill out the survey twice? This helps ensure a more accurate poll, but sometimes this feature is accomplished by not allowing the same computer to be used twice — a problem if respondents are going to be answering questions using a shared computer at a library or senior center, for example.

Below is a sampling of the many sites available. Note that prices range widely, with the more expensive sites boasting more complex options.

[QuestionPro](#) Provides free data collection and analytic capabilities to nonprofit groups for one year in exchange for putting links to QuestionPro on the organization's Web page and crediting QuestionPro on any marketing and press materials derived from its online surveys. After the one-year free deal ends, prices start at \$29 per month for paying customers, with no discounts for nonprofit groups.

[SurveyMonkey](#) Offers 16 question types, and can include images in survey questionnaires. Basic subscriptions, which allow up to 10 questions and 100 responses per survey, are free. For larger surveys, monthly fees start at \$19.95, with no discounts for nonprofit groups. Quarterly subscriptions, which are discounted for nonprofit groups, start at \$44.50.

[Zoomerang](#) Does not charge for simple surveys allowing up to 100 responses, which can be downloaded and are available on the site for 10 days. Gives a 40-percent discount for nonprofit groups on its paid services. Also offers translation services in 42 languages. Prices start at \$99 per month, though nonprofit groups can get a discounted quarterly rate at the same price.