

# Do It Yourself Surveys with Google Drive

Advisors Keynote

by Del Suggs

While **Survey Monkey**, **Survey Console**, and **Zoomerang** may be the most familiar names in online surveys, there is another source you should consider: **Google**. You can create your own survey in Google Drive (formerly called Google Docs), with beautiful graphics and all the form elements you will need, while at the same time be able to export all answers into Excel or get great graphs of the responses, all for free.

## Here is the step by step process:

**Create a Google account.** I'd suggest you create a gmail account-- you'll find it useful for your personal email. You can use that to access all the different services that Google offers.

**Log into Google.** When you go to the Google homepage, the log-in is at the top right side.

**Click on "Drive" on the top menu bar.** Look on the left side, there is a red box that reads "create." When you click on that, it opens a drop-down menu. Click on "Form."

At this point you can begin to create your survey. At the top, enter the name of the survey and any instructions or clarifications. Don't worry, you can always edit or enter this later if you want.

Two sample questions are automatically created for your form, which you can edit as

desired. You can change the **question type** to be text, paragraph text, multiple choice, checkboxes, choose from a list, scale, or grid.

**Click "Add Item"** in the upper left corner to add more questions. Click "SAVE" periodically in the upper right corner to save your work.

Notice you can make questions "required" by clicking the checkbox at the bottom of the question editing area. After you have finished editing a question and you click "done." You can edit it again by clicking the pencil icon on the right side of it. The second icon will duplicate the question, and the trash can will delete it.

You can also click and drag to reorder your questions as desired.

## Customize with a theme

This step is optional, but Google Forms allows you to select different themes to make your surveys look more visually interesting and polished. There are many different designs, and you can change them at any time. Just click the "Theme" button on the top menu bar.

After choosing a desired theme, click "Apply" in the upper left corner to return to the form editor.

## Personalize your form

After respondents submit your survey they will be shown a webpage which reads, "Thanks! Your response will now appear in

my spreadsheet." You can customize this message if desired.

You also can also choose to publish a response summary for respondents to see after they submit their own answers.

## Templates

You don't have to totally "reinvent the wheel." There are a number of templates available for you to use. They aren't technically templates, as they are actually surveys designed and used by others. Still, it's useful to see what others have done. Perhaps you'll see something you'd like to use in your survey. Even more important-- you might see something you hate and leave it out of your survey.

## Share your Survey

At the bottom of your Google Form editing window, a link is shown to your "live" public form. This is the link you want to click and copy, so you can share it with others who will respond to your survey.

You can embed this link in your webpage, blog, or Facebook page. Just be sure and test on the page where you post it.

You can also email the link, or even text or tweet it. Make sure you use a URL shortening service, like TinyURL, bit.ly or goo.gl to shorten the link-- it's pretty long.

I recommend using goo.gl. If you hadn't guessed, it's the URL shortener from Google. Go

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ahead, especially since you already have an account with them to create your survey. If you shorten the link with goo.gl, then also click on the “details” by the shortened link. It will present you with a QR code that you can also use to share the survey! Just copy it and paste it wherever you need. Goo.gl will also show you statistics on how many people have accessed your survey via the shortened link. That’s handy to see how people are accessing your survey.

## Check out your results

Your survey results can be viewed several ways. Data from your form goes directly into a Google Spreadsheet, which can be viewed online or downloaded as an Excel or other file type. On the top right menu bar, you can “See Responses”. Clicking on this opens a drop-down menu. If you select “Summary” you will see charts and percentages of the responses. If you select “Spreadsheet” you will see a downloadable spreadsheet that you can save and analyze.

You can change your survey and questions at any time, but you shouldn’t move the questions around after people have started submitting answers or the order of your spreadsheet columns can get confusing.

Unlike many commercial form and survey options, Google does not have a maximum number of respondents. The price is right, it’s Free. Give Google Drive a try this year, and challenge your

staff and students to use surveys to collect and analyze data about your programs.

## Ten Best Practices

There are a few things you need to keep in mind when you create your own survey. We’ve all answered a lousy survey before, and you know how unprofessional it appears. Here are a few quick tips to point you in the right direction for your survey.

1. What exactly do you want to know? Begin your survey with the end in mind, and create a survey that will provide you with useful data.
2. Use “skip logic” to move your respondents to their next question. “Branch” to another page in Google Drive. It helps to make sure your respondents don’t answer questions they are unable to answer.
3. Demographic questions should be last. You have a certain amount of goodwill among your respondents-- don’t waste it on the boring stuff.
4. Have an open ended question at the end, in case they want to tell you something you didn’t think to ask!
5. Make your questions as simple as possible. Use plain, conversational English, without jargon or slang. If you use an abbreviation, make sure you clarify it once. For example, the Association for the Promotion of Campus Activities (APCA)-- once you’ve named it, you can use

just the abbreviation “APCA” afterward.

6. Use neutral wording on your questions. Be very careful not to imply the answer you might prefer.
7. Ask general questions before specific questions. Use the specific questions to get more detailed data.
8. Use list, check box, and radio button (multiple choice) questions appropriately. Avoid questions which would permit conflicting responses.
9. Proofread and pilot your survey before you go live online. Check it carefully for errors and bias, and have several different selected people take the survey before you post it officially.
10. Add incentives to encourage response. Have you ever called or gone online to complete a survey from a purchase receipt that promised a gift card for one lucky respondent chosen at random? You could also provide other types of prizes, such as free or early admission to an upcoming special event or program.

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[Del@DelSuggs.com](mailto:Del@DelSuggs.com)

[www.DelSuggs.com](http://www.DelSuggs.com)