

Online Survey Recommendations to Improve Accessibility for Users with Blindness or Low Vision

When creating online surveys for people who are blind or have low vision, be aware that the assistive technology software, the version of that software, the specific web browser, and the version of that web browser may all play a part in the participant's survey experience. For example, there are several commonly used screen readers (e.g., JAWS, NVDA, VoiceOver). Each screen reader interacts differently with web content which can result in a different survey experience. Survey participants who use older versions of screen readers may experience difficulties with online surveys that people with newer versions do not experience. Using an older web browser version could also influence the survey experience. Multiple screen magnification tools are also used by people with low vision (e.g., ZoomText, Magnifier, Zoom) but we are not aware of as many differences in survey experience with these tools.

General recommendations

- Don't use matrices as a question type; use multiple choice questions instead.
- Use larger fonts or bold for survey takers with low vision. The smallest font we recommend is 16-point font.
- Make sure the font is black on a white background or a contrasting color to the background. Select the high contrast option for font color and background when available.
- Use headings if that option is available in your survey platform. This is helpful for screen reader users.
- Question numbers are recommended to assist with navigation.
- If you allow a limited range of responses to a question (e.g., a whole number between 0 and 50), clearly indicate that in the question.
- If questions allow multiple answers, adding text like "Select all that apply" as part of the question is helpful.
- If responses are required for certain questions, indicate that in the question.
- Label all buttons (e.g., "Next" instead of ">>"). If moving back (to previous pages) is an option, it may be helpful to let the participant know that in the opening instructions of the survey, in addition to labeling the button.
- Add alt text to any images used.
- Avoid motioned page transitions like fade, flip, or slide.
- Provide a clear indication that the person has reached the end of the survey, such as including a "Submit" button on the last page, including text at the end of the survey confirming survey completion (e.g., Thank you for completing our survey...), or both.
- Some web browsers may work better with specific survey platforms. Check your survey platform for recommendations.

- Pilot test your survey with people who use the assistive technology(ies) of your target group. Even if you follow all accessibility recommendations, pilot testing is needed to uncover any accessibility or usability problems with your survey.

Qualtrics-specific recommendations

- For multiple choice questions with a comment box attached to a potential answer option like “No, please explain,” it’s better to have that answer option as the last option. Otherwise, screen reader users may get “stuck” in the comment box.
- Although considered an accessible option, rank order questions that require participants to pick their top options (such as first, second, and third) from a list using the ‘text box’ response option have been tricky for some screen reader users. (This may also be true for other survey platforms, but we can only comment on this in Qualtrics.)
- Qualtrics has a tool called Check Survey Accessibility that will check whether your survey meets WCAG 2.0 accessibility guidelines and give suggestions on how to improve the survey experience. For more information and Qualtrics-specific recommendations about accessibility, see <https://www.qualtrics.com/support/survey-platform/survey-module/survey-tools/check-survey-accessibility/>
- Qualtrics has a [“Simple Layout” style format](#) that is considered more accessible; however, there are some limitations to that style format. For example, you may not be able to use all logic options, and some question styles may not be available.
 - For people with low vision using high contrast, we found that the “Modern” style format works best.
- There are two options for adding headings to your surveys in Qualtrics. Information about this can be found on the Qualtrics Community webpage: <https://community.qualtrics.com/XMcommunity/discussion/735/headers-within-survey>



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