

Writing a Good Survey Question

Elaboration 1 · Asking a question with clear categories

ELABORATION FOCUS

Acquiring data through surveys by writing a question about a categorical variable, and listing choices that everyone can answer with exactly one option.

LEARNING INTENTION I can write a survey question that everyone can answer.

Question

Choices

One only

Everyone

Fair

1

Pick a Topic

Step 1: choose something your class can answer. Step 2: keep it simple.

2

List the Choices

Step 3: write 3 or 4 choices.
Step 4: check every answer fits one of them.

3

Test It

Step 5: ask two friends first.
Step 6: fix any choice that is unclear.

MODEL · A QUESTION WITH FOUR CLEAR CHOICES

Every person picks one pet only, so the four totals add up to the class size.

Choice	Tally	Total
cat		7
dog		6
bird		3
fish		2

A good question has clear choices, and every person picks exactly one of them.

TEACHER MODELLING ROUTINE

I do → We do → You do

WATCH FOR

Choices that overlap, so a person could honestly pick two of them.

REMEMBER

Say it to students as: "Can everyone answer this with just one choice?"

MATERIALS

Survey sheets, clipboards, sticky notes, class list, whiteboard.

Teacher note: an other choice is useful but should be a last resort. If half the class picks other, the categories were not the right ones to start with.