Dillman’s Highlights

From:

Dillman, D., Smyth, J.D., and Christian, L.M. (2009). *Internet, mail and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method.* Hoboken, New Jersey: Jon Wiley and Sons.

# In No Particular Order

* **Drop-downs vs. radio buttons:** Response times are not significantly different between radio button and drop-down box. With drop-down, respondents are more likely to select visible options (p. 77).
* **Visual Analog Scales (sliders):** Studies do not suggest these are better than either horizontally or vertically presented radio buttons (p. 77).
* **Response Scales—Number of options:** For bi-polar scales (agree/disagree) best is 5 or 7. For uni-polar, best is 4 or 5 (p. 137).
* **Response Scales – Response anchors:** In general, it’s better to use response-specific options rather than “agree/disagree”. The response-specific approach increases reliability and validity (p. 138).
* **Response Scales – Response anchor labeling:** It’s better to label each response option rather than label only the polar responses and providing numbers. In general it’s also better ***not*** to include numbers in the response choice labels (p. 142-45).
* **Presentation of response options:** Present all options in one row, either horizontally or vertically (p. 145).
* **Ordering of response options:** Research is mixed on whether good/more should be at top/left or bottom/right. Respondents seemed to answer more quickly in an experiment with positive category presented first (p. 146).
* **Non-substantive options:** Place non-substantive options (I don’t know, N/A, etc.) at the end and visually separate if possible.
* **Pagination:** Responses to questions on the same page tend to be correlated (whether they are related or not) so it’s best to keep similar questions on the same page but use a new page for a different topic (p. 204).
* **Required answers:** Don’t require answers unless absolutely necessary. It frustrates people (driving up drop-outs) or forces them to lie (increasing measurement error) (p. 209).
* **Navigation Buttons:** Consider placing the ‘next’ button at the bottom LH of the page, right in the sight-line as a person works his/her way down the page. Place the ‘back’ button in the same horizontal plane but at the right margin (p. 207-9).