

## Survey reminders

Reminding people about the importance (or obligation) of their participation in your survey can increase response rates, minimise bias in the data, and reduce the need to approach an excessive number of business.

### How can survey reminders fit into the project?

Key issues to consider	
<b>Survey purpose</b>	Do you need a higher response rate or more representative data (e.g. to support funding and policy decisions), or will general indicators suffice (e.g. repeating customer feedback survey on a program)?
<b>Resources</b>	Consider the resources available. For example, more time and money would be required for a series of reminder letters being mailed out to respondents. This is may be more than the resources required to develop and manage an email account for reminder emails in an online survey. Additionally, consider the resources that can be saved from using a good reminder strategy. For example, rather than purchasing a significantly large business contact list and approaching them once only, consider approaching fewer businesses and approaching them a few times by using survey reminders.
<b>Time</b>	How long can the survey stay open for (i.e. collection period)? How can the reminder fit in the collection period, considering the mode? For example, a mailed letter may take more time to reach the respondent, while an email, SMS, or phone call will typically take less time to make the contact.

### How should the reminder be designed?

Key issues to consider	
<b>Mode</b>	Consider the constraints and opportunities of your selected mode. For example, an SMS may be limited to 160 characters, but the respondent receives the message quickly, to a personal device, and it's short and easy to read. Conversely, an email can deliver more detail, can be accessed on multiple devices, but may not be fully read.
<b>Respondent and gatekeeper</b>	The reminder message and strategy should be designed for your target respondent and gatekeeper. <u>Target respondent</u> : The person or people in the role ideally placed to answer your questions (e.g. a large business may have separate teams managing recruitment, salaries, and staff training; whereas one person or team may be managing all of this in a small business). <u>Gatekeeper</u> : The people who will initially open the mail, answer the telephone, and screen the request for participation (e.g. Owner in small business, Administrative Assistant in medium sized business, Mail Deliveries team in large organisation).
<b>Highlight key elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Survey title, and a concise and unique subject line</li> <li>○ Purpose of the survey</li> <li>○ If the survey is mandatory</li> <li>○ How to access, complete and submit the survey.</li> <li>○ Due date (original due date, or extended due date)</li> <li>○ How to access or contact help information</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain consistency</b>	Use the same branding and key words as in the survey invitation and other correspondence (e.g. pamphlets, website) to help jog the provider's memory and minimise confusion
<b>Tone</b>	If you are using multiple reminders, each reminder can be designed to read increasingly urgent.

## How can the reminder fit into my survey schedule?

Send the first reminder four to eight days after sending out the invitation. Send the second reminder to those who haven't responded yet, two to four weeks after the invitation, including another copy of the survey materials (eg. reply paid envelope with the paper questionnaire). Further reminders or follow up can be made via a different mode to help capture the final non-responders. When determining your survey reminder schedule, consider the quality of data required, report due date, survey purpose, and time required to complete and submit the questionnaire.

**Example** reminder schedule for a simple product evaluation online survey, in business days.

Day 1 – Send invitation to participate  
 Day 6 – Send first reminder  
 Day 11 – Due date for survey submission

**Example** reminder schedule for policy evaluation mail out survey, in business days.

Day 1 – Mail out invitation to participate  
 Day 8 – Mail out first reminder  
 Day 16 – Mail out second reminder  
 Day 20 – Due date for survey submission  
 Day 23 – Call non-responders

## Example first reminder email for a simple product evaluation online survey

Subject line: How did our Advice Line for Small Businesses perform?

Dear [Name/Job Title],

Last week we sent you a survey, asking for your opinions on our Advice Line for Small Businesses. If you have already completed and submitted the survey, thank you for your valuable input. If not, please **complete your survey** [[link to survey](#)], **and submit your responses by [date]**.

Your responses are much appreciated as they will help us provide you a better service.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [email address] or [phone number].

Sincerely,

[Survey Manager]

## Example second reminder letter for a policy evaluation mail out survey

Subject line: Your participation is vital in evaluating the new Industry Policies

Dear [Name/Job Title],

Three weeks ago we sent you a survey seeking your business' experiences in applying the new Industry Policies. If you have already submitted your survey, thank you for your valuable input. If not, please **complete your survey** [[link to survey](#)], **and submit your responses by the new date of [date]**.

We have extended the due date because your particular responses are vital in helping us evaluate the new industry policies and represent other businesses like yours.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [email address] or [phone number].

Sincerely,

[Survey Manager]

## Example third reminder SMS for a mandatory survey

Sender name: [Agency name]

Message: Remember to complete your registration form by 30 June to avoid penalties, or contact us at 1800 123 123 for help. [Agency name]

## Further information

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010). Reminder Letters. *ABS Forms Design Standards Manual, 2010*. Available [here](#).

Dillman, D. A. (2007) *Mail and Internet Surveys: The tailored design method* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.