

# Creative Ways to Solicit Youth Input

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*A Hands-On Guide for Youth Practitioners*





<b>What it's good for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To help the group create a creative fun survey that can be eaten.</li> <li>✓ To design a fairly anonymous survey.</li> </ul>
<b>Preparation and Materials</b> 	<p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, ideally with the young people themselves, a set of questions (a protocol) as well as response categories for each question. Note: Limit the number of questions on candy surveys to 5-6.</li> <li>• Code the response categories to match the colors of the candies or candy wrappers you will be using. Note: Use individually wrapped candies that can be safely eaten after handling. Example: The red candy could represent "very true" or "learned a lot"; the green candy could represent "somewhat true" or "learned some"; the yellow candy could represent "not at all true" or "learned nothing."</li> <li>• Place an empty bucket or jar next to or below each posted question.</li> </ul>
<b>Group Size</b> 	<p>Many</p>
<b>Age Levels</b> 	<p>This can work well for any age. For younger kids, you may need to read the question aloud, establish this as a routine part of your program, and/or have pictures to indicate the responses.</p>
<b>Time</b> 	<p>10 minutes: 5 to vote and 5 to tally</p>
<b>Setting</b> 	<p>This can happen anywhere you can post a question and place some buckets.</p> <p>If responding to a presentation or a facilitator, you may want to set this up outside the presentation room so the facilitator isn't present for the survey about themselves.</p>

## How to conduct the activity



1. Have the group write each question in very large print on a sheet of standard 8½ by 11 paper.
2. The question can be posted outside a classroom, workshop room, or wherever the group meets. This allows the respondents to have some privacy when they are responding to the survey. This is particularly important if the survey is about the quality of the training or program or the facilitator's or program leader's approach.
3. Make bowls of individually colored candy available so that participants can easily select from the bowls.
4. Ask the participants to take the survey using their candy. They should answer each question by taking a piece of candy that matches the answer they've chosen and dropping it into the bucket. For example, if "very true" is color-coded red, and the respondent wants to choose that answer, the person should drop a red candy in that bucket.
5. Once everyone has had the chance to complete the survey, count up the different colored candies per question and record the results.

Variation: You can use different colored or shaped stickers or different kinds of whole fruit (that won't become squashed in a bucket) as your response options.

## Things to watch for



- This is mostly an anonymous survey, especially if a lot of kids are doing it all at once and no one is paying attention to the others or kids can hide the color in their hand and drop it in without anyone really seeing it.
- Ask the participants to refrain from eating the candy until after they have taken the survey. Also, make sure they do not eat candy from the buckets that are holding the survey responses.

Notes: The Candy Surveys is similar to the Token Survey activity. This one has one bucket, into which different colored responses are tossed, and can include a few (5-6) questions. As written, the candy survey happens and is tallied right away (so you can eat the candy).

In the Token Surveys, a token is tossed into one of many buckets to indicate the response and can usually work with only one key question. As written, the Token Surveys can gather information over time.

## Example



If you have a series of presentations to a group, you can have them rate each presentation. Using the example above where the colors indicate "learned a lot", "learned some" and "learned nothing"; you could ask how much you learned about the topic or about each of 3-4 specific, clear sub-topics covered in each presentation.

You could then ask a few additional questions to evaluate the presentation itself (red = very true, green = somewhat true, and yellow = not true at all), such as:

- Did the facilitator have fun presenting?
- Was this topic interesting to me?
- Will I use this information in my life/our project/school work (whatever context seems appropriate)?

## Source

Kim Sabo Flores. (2008). *Youth Participatory Evaluation: Strategies for Engaging Young People* (pp. 127). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.



<b>What it's good for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To get responses from youth when they need to categorize or choose from among several options or kinds of options.</li> <li>✓ Can be used as a post-test or a matched pre- and post-test.</li> </ul>
<b>Preparation and Materials</b>  	<p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a set of cards with images in advance</li> <li>• Determine the sorting categories in advance</li> </ul> <p>Additional Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital camera (optional)</li> <li>• Paper and glue (optional)</li> </ul>
<b>Group Size</b> 	<p>Many</p>
<b>Age Levels</b> 	<p>Works well for younger and middle school aged youth</p>
<b>Time</b> 	<p>5-15 minutes depending on discussion afterward</p>
<b>Setting</b> 	<p>Anywhere (windy outdoors not recommended)</p>

## How to conduct the activity



1. Have sets of prepared cards for everyone in the activity. Ask them to sort the cards into 2-3 categories (or rank them).
2. Ask students to share with the group why they sorted the way they did or have them write a short answer about how they might do differently in the future.
3. Use a digital camera to record each student's sort to use for later analysis and reporting. Or, have them glue down their sorts onto paper to save for later.

Variation: You can make this a more active experience by having categories around the room and having the youth sort the cards into those categories by getting up and moving around.

## Things to watch for



- Watch for leading images or categories.
- If using Frequently, Sometimes and Never as sorting or ranking categories, include a description of what you mean (e.g. Frequently is four or more times a week; see example below).

## Example



Ask them to sort pictures of foods they eat "A lot" or "A little". Or, they can sort foods into "Healthy" or "Unhealthy foods".

Ask students to categorize the activities they did in the program into "Like" and "Don't Like".

Ask students to sort activities they do at home into "Frequently, Sometimes and Never".

## Source

Gray, D., Brown, S., & Macanuso, J. (2010, July). *Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media.



<b>What it's good for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To measure the number of youth with certain attitudes or values.</li> <li>✓ To elicit information about why youth believe what they do.</li> <li>✓ Can be used as a post-test or a matched pre- and post-test.</li> </ul>
<b>Preparation and Materials</b> 	<p>Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a set of values statements in advance: 5-6 may be enough, although you might be able to do 10-12 with older youth (high school).</li> <li>• Create a grid to record the number of people at each location for each statement.</li> <li>• Create labels for the four corners.</li> </ul>
<b>Group Size</b> 	<p>Many</p>
<b>Age Levels</b> 	<p>Appropriate for older youth; this can work with a well-established group of younger (elementary) youth. See also the variation for younger participants below.</p>
<b>Time</b> 	<p>5-15 minutes depending on discussion afterward</p>
<b>Setting</b> 	<p>Anywhere</p>

## How to conduct the activity



1. Set up four corners of the room with labels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, and Disagree.
2. Read the first prepared statement of values or attitudes. Ask each youth to stand in the corner that reflects whether they Strongly Agree, Agree, etc. with the statement. Record the number of kids in each position.
3. Repeat with each subsequent statement.

Variation: You can ask a few of the kids in each corner to explain why they are standing where they are. Some youth may choose to move to a different corner based on others' responses! Record this as well.

Variation: For younger audiences, you can simplify to Agree and Disagree. You might want to have an adult at each point to say out loud what it represents, especially if students can't yet read.

## Things to watch for



- You want to make sure with ground rules and the way you follow up with youth that they feel safe disagreeing with any of the statements. For example, you may want another adult they know well to facilitate this for your group.

## Example



At the end of a 6 week enrichment program within a comprehensive after school program, you can read students statements such as:

- I had fun at this enrichment.
- I learned something new in this enrichment.
- I have used something I learned here in school.
- I have used something I learned here outside of school.

Record where kids stood and responses to any follow up questions. When all the questions have been asked, ask the group if there is anything else they want to add.

## Crafting Interview & Focus Group Questions

### Be specific

It can be hard to understand what your interviewer wants to know about, especially when they ask very broad, general questions. This can be particularly tough for young kids, who are very concrete thinkers.

Use your knowledge of your program and your understanding of what you want to learn from the interview to craft more specific questions.

Instead of: “What did you learn in this program?”

Try: “Can you tell me three things you learned about being a leader in this program?”

Instead of: “Did you like anything here?”

Try: “If you were telling another kid about this program, what would you tell them are the best things about this program?”

### Give examples

This can be tough, because you don't want to coach kids' answers, but do want to be sure that they are thinking about the right activity or experience when they think of a response.

One way to give interviewees examples without implying that you want a specific answer is to do some context setting for your questions. Before asking kids to talk about their experiences in leadership development, remind them of a few of the different things that they did as part of your program's leadership development curriculum.

Be as factual as you can when setting context. Describe the activity as, “The field trip that we took with Ms. Jamila to see the youth clown troupe” rather than, “That totally awesome field trip that blew your mind and convinced you to sign up for Barnum and Bailey as soon as you turn 18.”

## Have backups

Sometimes, people just don't want to talk to you. It's OK! Having a few backups on hand can make an interview go better:

Additional questions – Don't feel shy about changing the subject if you need to. Talk about sports, what the kid is reading, what gossip is going around school... just get them talking, then turn the conversation back to the topics you are interested in.

Additional modalities – If time permits, prepare a collage activity, a sort, or another version of your interview. If it doesn't, ask the kid to draw you a picture or tell you a story.