



## A Phone Interview: Steps to Increase Response From Your Target Audience

There are a number of measures that you can take to increase your phone interview response rates:

1. Announce the phone interview and its rationale ahead of time in bulletins, magazines, extension news, and newspapers throughout the area if it is for a needs assessment. This publicity has garnered great support for extension surveys in Pennsylvania in the past. If the phone interview is for a program evaluation, announce it as part of the program's introduction. Be sure to say that only a sample of the target audience will be asked. Selecting a sample creates positive feelings because the target audience knows that everyone is not being harassed. Also, those who are asked to participate know that their views represent others like themselves and are thus more likely to cooperate.
2. Consider sending a pre-notification letter or postcard to the sample.  
Reasons:
  - a. the target audience will know that the interview is legitimate and worth their time which should increase the likelihood of a response, and
  - b. if you include the interview questions, they can look over the questions and have answers ready. Decide on signatures and letterhead.
3. Consider promising a reward for participation. Example: a copy of the results, or for farmers, a dust mask for use in spraying plants.
4. Construct a sample of the target audience who will be, or need to be, in an extension program. Make sure the telephone numbers are up-to-date.
5. Draw a sample; get names and telephone numbers with area codes. In order to anticipate wrong numbers, people who are not at home or ill etc., and a percentage who won't cooperate, the sample should be 2 or 3 times the number that is needed. It is more scientific to draw a larger than recommended sample in the beginning than to have to go back and draw more names, i.e., a new sample.
6. Decide at what two or three periods in the day or evening your target audience would be likely to be free to talk on the phone. Figuring out the best time to find your target audience at home eliminates the time and funds of returning the call.
7. Format the interview to reflect the need for an interviewer to record answers while talking to someone on the phone. For instance, have all the answer categories flush right on the interview sheet.
8. Pretest the interview in person and on the phone among your target audience who are likely to be the respondents. Be sure to include likely members of the target audience at the lower ends of your definition of the problem area since they are the least likely to cooperate with this project. You want their responses! **Click on [Tipsheet 65](#) and [Pennsylvania Examples, #3 and #15](#) for other aspects of a phone survey.**

For further reading, consult:

Frey, James H. 1983. *Survey Research By Telephone*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Groves, Robert M., Paul P. Biemer, Lars E. Lyberg, James T. Massey, William L. Nicholls II, and Joseph Waksberg. 1988. *Telephone Survey Methodology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Salant, Priscilla, and Don A. Dillman. 1994. *How To Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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