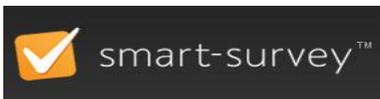


# How to design and use free online surveys to collect feedback on your services





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**Thinking of sending out an online survey and not sure where to start?  
Or want to improve the surveys that you send out?**

**This short guide to using free online surveys will give you some useful tips on  
how to choose an online survey-provider and how to get started.**

An online survey is a great way to collect feedback from your organisation's service-users or other stakeholders. However, deciding which survey-provider to use and designing a good survey can still prove quite challenging. This guide will help you to:

- **decide** whether to use an online survey for collecting the information you want
- **find out** more about what the different free survey-providers offer
- **choose** a survey-provider which will suit your needs
- **understand** more about designing online surveys.

## **When to use an online survey**

Online surveys have a number of advantages over other methods of collecting information. In particular, they are:

- **Cheap** – there are no printing or postage costs.
- **Flexible** – you can use questions that have drop-down menus, or in some cases, you can direct people to specific questions depending on the answers they give.
- **Quick** – you can start getting responses to your survey within minutes and most people respond within two or three days of being asked to complete a survey.
- **Cost-effective** – since respondents enter their answers directly into the survey, this saves you time and money in entering data yourself and also makes analysis quicker and easier.

However, online surveys have some disadvantages which you should consider when deciding whether to use an online survey:

- **They rely on your respondents having access to the internet** which may limit the response you get from some groups of people and potentially bias your results.
- **They can sometimes be affected by technical problems** e.g. computers crashing or screens being slow to load.
- **They may be difficult for some people to complete** e.g. people with visual impairment or people who have difficulty using a mouse or keyboard.

In addition, research suggests that average response-rates to online surveys range from 10% to 30% so be realistic in your expectations of the response you may get from your own online survey.

## Choosing a free online survey-provider

A quick search on the internet will bring up details of numerous companies who provide free online surveys. But these free surveys come with some limitations, particularly in terms of:

- the number of surveys you can create
- the number of questions you can ask on each survey
- the number of responses you can collect
- or the ways in which you can control how people fill in your survey.

For example, some will allow you to set up 'skip-logic' (where respondents are taken to specific questions depending on their answers to a question) whilst others will allow you to control what happens once respondents have completed the survey. Most free surveys will also put their own logo or branding on each screen of the survey you create.

We have produced a comparison chart which provides information on 13 commonly-used free online surveys. Apart from considering what design features each one offers, think about what your survey will look like and how you will be able to access the data collected. It's particularly important to think about:

- how many questions you want your survey to cover
- how much control you want over the look of your survey
- how long you need to be able to access the responses in your survey
- whether you need to be able to download these to your own computer.

Use our [comparison chart](#) to help you select two or three of the survey-providers that you like best and spend a bit of time creating test surveys so that you can see how each one functions. Have a go at writing a few questions, filling out your test survey and looking at how you can then view and use the data collected. This will help you decide which one best fits your requirements.



## How to get started

Once you have chosen a survey-provider, you simply register for the service and are then ready to start creating your surveys. However before you start, it can be useful to spend some time mapping out your survey on paper (particularly if you are planning to use skip-logic).

Some survey-providers supply templates (i.e. a pre-designed survey) that you can adapt to create your own survey. Or you can choose to create your own survey by selecting a theme (background colour, font style etc.) and defining your own questions and answer choices as you go along.

### Different question types

Most online surveys will provide a choice of question types ranging from multiple-choice and scaled questions through to open questions, as shown in the following examples:

**An open question with a text box** i.e. where respondents can write whatever they like. For example:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| How has our service helped you over the last year? |  |
|--|--|

**A question with multiple answer-choices** i.e. where respondents select one or more options from a list that you present to them. For example:

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Please tell us which of the following services you have used in the last six months: |                          |
| Weekly support group   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Online forum   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information leaflets   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**A matrix of multiple responses** i.e. where respondents can select only one answer in each row. For example:

|                                  |     |    |          |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|----------|
| Did our project help you....     |     |    |          |
|                                  | yes | no | not sure |
| cope better with your situation? | ○   | ○  | ○        |
| make new friends?                | ○   | ○  | ○        |
| feel more confident?             | ○   | ○  | ○        |

**A scaled question** i.e. where respondents select one option from a scale. For example:

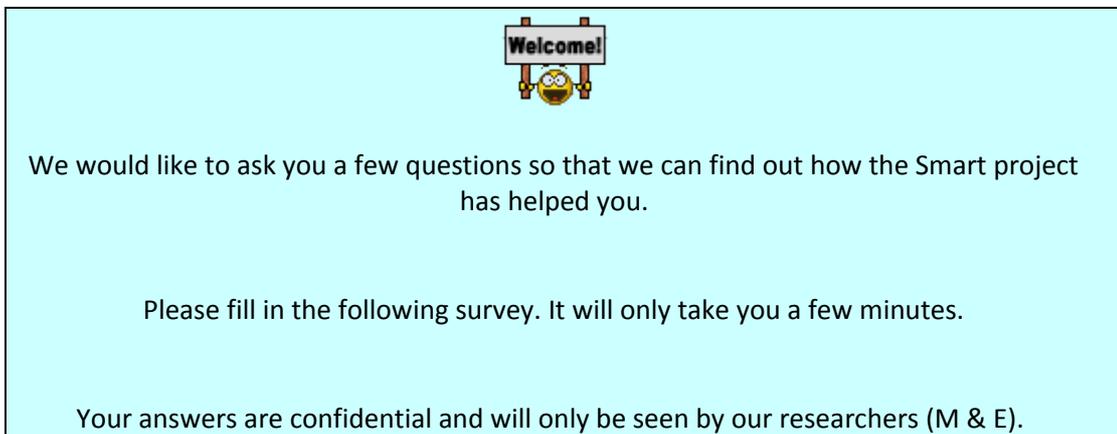
|   |              |               |                  |                    |          |             |
|---|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|
| How helpful were the following services.... |              |               |                  |                    |          |             |
|   | Very helpful | Quite helpful | Not very helpful | Not at all helpful | Not sure | Did not use |
| weekly support group                        | ○            | ○             | ○                | ○                  | ○        | ○           |

|                      |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| online forum         | <input type="radio"/> |
| information leaflets | <input type="radio"/> |

## Designing your survey

It may seem obvious but the design of your survey is really important in terms of making people feel inclined to complete your survey, guiding them through it and ensuring they give you the information you need to collect. Here are our ten top tips to help you design your online survey:

- 1. First of all, people should see a clear, introductory screen,** telling them who the survey is from, what it's about and roughly how long it will take to complete. Keep this to a few sentences or you will put people off before they've even started! Here is an example of a greetings screen from a survey to young people:



- 2. Make sure your survey is accessible** and easy to read (particularly by people who are visually impaired). So make sure you have a good contrast between the font colour and the background and use a large-enough font size. It is a good idea to have enough spacing between questions as it makes it easier for people to read them. You might also want to think about breaking up your questions over a few screens rather than having them all on one long screen.

It is important to check whether the survey-provider you are using has complied with disability legislation as this now covers how accessible websites are to people with disabilities.

- 3. Avoid cluttering up your screens** with too many questions or unnecessary numbering. This is particularly important in terms of keeping it accessible for people who find online surveys difficult. Try to keep the design simple by using no more than two different font types and avoid using underline or capitals to emphasise certain words – use bold print instead.

- 4. Write short, clear questions** with simple instructions (where needed) and appropriate response-options. This is particularly important with multiple-response questions where you need to be clear whether you want people to be able to select lots of responses or just one.

Adding a comment box is also useful as it prevents respondents getting frustrated if they can't say what they want to say. And do give your respondents options such as 'don't know' or 'not sure' as otherwise they may select responses that are not appropriate or relevant to them.

- 5. Order your questions in a logical way.** Group similar questions together. Some people suggest it is best to place important ones towards the beginning of the survey and put profile questions (such as age, gender, location, etc.) at the end.
- 6. Keep your survey focused.** Resist the urge to ask questions that don't directly relate to the purpose of the survey or are just 'nice to know'.
- 7. Make sure your survey is user-friendly.** Your respondents may lose interest if you ask them too many open questions so try to provide tick boxes wherever possible with text-boxes for additional comments. Spend some time thinking about the different people who will complete your survey and make sure the questions and answer-options will be appropriate to them.

Be especially careful with 'required answers' (where respondents are forced to answer a question before they can move to the next question) as these can lead to respondents abandoning your survey if they don't want to answer that question.

- 8. Thank respondents for their participation** at the end of your survey. You may also want to think about whether you are going to share the results of the survey with them in which case you may want to add a couple of sentences to your thank-you screen.
- 9. Remember to comply with Data Protection legislation.** To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, your survey's introduction must include the name of the organisation conducting the survey and how the data will be handled (i.e. confidential, personally identifiable for database building or direct marketing, etc).
- 10. Check your survey will give you usable information.** It's a good idea to test it out yourself and ask other people to do so too. It's often surprising how questions that seemed completely clear and logical when you wrote them don't always work so well when you ask people to answer them!

Click [here](#) if you would like to see an example of a poorly-designed survey.

## Launching your survey

Once you are ready to send out your survey, here are our top tips to help you get a good response:

- 1. Draft some introductory text** (that will go in the email or other announcement of your survey) which explains what the survey is about, why people have been asked to fill it in, how long it will take and how the information will be used.
- 2. Consider offering an incentive** which can help boost your response rate. For example, you might want to offer an opportunity for people to enter their details for a prize draw.
- 3. Decide how long to leave your survey open for.** Generally, it's a good idea to leave it open for a minimum of one week although it doesn't need to remain open for much longer than a couple of weeks. People tend to fill in online surveys soon after they receive the request – or not at all! A reminder can be helpful in boosting your response-rate but don't send out more than one.
- 4. Decide how you want people to complete your survey.** For example, do you want to give them the option to exit the survey and go back to it later or do you want respondents to be able to complete your survey only once?
- 5. Make sure it goes to the right people.** It's important that your survey reaches the people you intended, otherwise this could distort your results.
- 6. Remember to close your survey** on the day you decided on otherwise you may get late responses trickling in and affecting your findings.



## Using your survey data

Finally, you will want to think about how to make use of the information collected by your survey. Most survey-sites offer some way of seeing a summary of the results – and in some cases, you can share these with other people or even download them. You may be able to filter your results so that you can look at how particular groups of respondents answered the survey. However, be

careful how you analyse questions that were not answered by all the respondents as this can affect your results.

## Sharing your findings

And when you have finalised your findings, remember to put a summary up on your website or somewhere where your respondents will be able to see it. It is important that people feel that the time spent giving you their views was worthwhile.

## Want some more help?

We can give you some free feedback on a survey you have designed – [click here](#) to contact us.

Or if you have found this guide useful but would like to know more, [click here](#) to receive our follow-up guide to using online surveys. This guide, available early next year, will cover:

- why you might want to pay for a more sophisticated features of an online survey
- what different survey-providers are offering
- how to make best use of advanced design and survey-management features.

Finally, [click here](#) if you would like to give us some feedback on this guide.

### About M & E

M & E is a small consultancy offering advice, training and support with monitoring and evaluation to organisations in the voluntary sector. We can provide:

- **training for organisations, specific teams or individuals** - helping you to understand more about the key concepts involved in monitoring and evaluation
- **hands-on practical help with setting up monitoring and evaluation systems** - working with you to design and implement an evaluation framework or to improve existing monitoring and evaluation systems
- **an evaluation of a specific project or piece of work** - ensuring that you can learn from and report effectively about the delivery of your services
- **bespoke toolkits and guides** - specific guidance for staff and volunteers on monitoring and evaluation issues
- **a free 'outcomes check'** - helping you to make sure that the outcomes you have put in funding bids are clearly and appropriately defined

[Click here](#) to visit our website for more information.



# **Comparison Chart of free online survey-providers**

**compiled by M & E Consulting**

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**This document aims to provide helpful information on the survey-providers covered. Whilst we have done our best to ensure the accuracy of the content, M & E Consulting cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or mis-information.**

| Survey name   | BASIC FEATURES                        |  |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
|   | Number of surveys allowed per account | Number of questions allowed per survey | Number of responses allowed   | Branding  |
| <b>Booroo</b><br><a href="http://booroo.com">booroo.com</a>   | 10                                    | 20                                     | 250 responses per survey  | Booroo logo is on every page  |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b><br><a href="http://www.esurveyspro.com">www.esurveyspro.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | Unlimited   | Google Ads are displayed on each page and 'powered by eSurveysPro' is on each page                                    |
| <b>Google Forms</b><br><a href="http://www.google.com/gooogle-d-s/forms/">http://www.google.com/gooogle-d-s/forms/</a>  | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | Unlimited   | All surveys say 'powered by Google docs' at the bottom of each page   |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b><br><a href="http://www.kwiksurveys.com">www.kwiksurveys.com</a>   | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | Unlimited   | Surveys display 'Kwik Surveys' at the bottom of each page   |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b><br><a href="http://www.limeservice.com">www.limeservice.com</a><br><b>Open Source software:</b><br><a href="http://www.limesurvey.org">www.limesurvey.org</a> | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | 25 responses per month are free. Beyond that, you purchase the number of responses you want each time you use a survey. | You see the LimeSurvey logo when you are administering the survey but there is no branding in the surveys themselves. |
| <b>PollDaddy</b><br><a href="http://www.polldaddy.com">www.polldaddy.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | 10                                     | 100 responses per month   | Free accounts see 'create your own survey with PollDaddy.com' at the bottom of each page                              |
| <b>QuestionPro</b><br><a href="http://www.questionpro.com">www.questionpro.com</a>  | 1                                     | 10                                     | 100 responses total   | Free accounts see 'powered by QuestionPro' at the top and bottom of each page   |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b><br><a href="http://www.smart-survey.co.uk">www.smart-survey.co.uk</a>   | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | 50 responses per month  | Free accounts see 'powered by Smart-Survey' at the bottom of each page  |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b><br><a href="http://www.surveygizmo.com">www.surveygizmo.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | Unlimited                              | Free accounts get 250 responses   | Free accounts see 'powered by SurveyGizmo' at the bottom of each page   |
| <b>Survey monkey</b><br><a href="http://www.surveymonkey.com">www.surveymonkey.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | 10                                     | 100 responses per survey  | Free accounts see 'powered by Survey Monkey' at the bottom of each page   |
| <b>Survs</b><br><a href="http://www.survs.com">www.survs.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | 10                                     | 200 responses per survey  | None  |
| <b>Wufoo</b><br><a href="http://www.wufoo.com">www.wufoo.com</a>  | 3                                     | 10                                     | 100 responses per month   | Wufoo branding on the forms however it is possible to change the Wufoo logo   |
| <b>Zoomerang</b><br><a href="http://www.zoomerang.com">www.zoomerang.com</a>  | Unlimited                             | 12                                     | 100 responses per survey  | In free account, you will see Zoomerang branding  |

| Survey name                     | KEY FEATURES   |   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
|                                 | User-friendliness  | Data access   |
| <b>Booroo</b>                   | Straight-forward to use  | Survey data is held as long as the account is active                          |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b>              | Generally fairly easy to get the hang of it but some things take a bit of working out for oneself  | Survey data is held as long as the account is active                          |
| <b>Google Forms</b>             | Straight-forward to use but not much in the way of explanatory text  | Survey data is held as long as the account is active                          |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b>             | Straight-forward, simple design which makes it easy for the user to set up and manage their surveys  | Until downloaded / 6 months   |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b> | Lots of icons which explain how to use them when you hover your mouse over them. However it takes a while to figure out how to add questions, for example. | Data is held as long as account is accessed at least once in a 3 month period |
| <b>PollDaddy</b>                | Straight-forward, simple design which makes it easy for the user to set up and manage their surveys  | Survey data is held as long as the account is active.                         |
| <b>QuestionPro</b>              | Survey design requires users to work out what features they need and how to use them   | Survey data is held as long as account is active                              |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b>             | Straight-forward, simple design which makes it easy for the user to set up and manage their surveys  | Survey data is held as long as account is active                              |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b>              | Lots of guidance provided in designing surveys   | Survey data is held as long as account is active                              |
| <b>Survey monkey</b>            | A basic survey is easy to set up. Additional features are provided with guidance   | Survey data is held as long as account is active                              |
| <b>Survs</b>                    | Extremely easy to use  | For as long as account is active  |
| <b>Wufoo</b>                    | Extremely user-friendly. It takes you through the process of creating a survey step-by-step  | Survey data is held as long as account is active                              |
| <b>Zoomerang</b>                | Easy to set up and use instantly. Pop up guidance available. Easy to change font type, colour and size and easy to add pages and questions.                | Unlimited   |

| Survey name                     | SURVEY DESIGN  |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
|                                 | Number of question types available                               | Option to require respondents to answer questions | Option to apply skip logic on questions                       | Ability to edit survey once launched  |
| <b>Booroo</b>                   | 6 basic question types which have additional options             | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b>              | 11   | Yes   | Only in some paid accounts                                    | Yes   |
| <b>Google Forms</b>             | 7  | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b>             | 11   | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b> | 27   | Yes   | Yes   | Settings can generally be changed – but deleting or adding questions or sub-questions is not possible after launch. |
| <b>PollDaddy</b>                | 3 plus some additional standard fields e.g. for names, dates etc | Yes   | Yes   | Yes   |
| <b>QuestionPro</b>              | 17   | Yes   | Only in paid accounts   | Yes   |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b>             | 10   | Only in paid accounts                             | Only in 'pro' account   | Yes   |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b>              | Over 20 standard question types.                                 | Yes   | Only in paid accounts   | Yes   |
| <b>Survey monkey</b>            | 15 question types, each type having additional options           | Yes   | Only in paid accounts   | Yes   |
| <b>Surv</b>                     | 4 basic questions types which have additional options            | Yes   | Only in paid accounts   | Yes (although you have to close the survey while you do it if you want to add in new questions)                     |
| <b>Wufoo</b>                    | 7 plus some additional standard fields e.g. for names, dates etc | Yes   | Up to 3 'skip-logics' on either questions or pages per survey | Yes   |
| <b>Zoomerang</b>                | 15   | Only in paid accounts                             | Only in pro and premium accounts                              | You can edit the text of a question but adding or moving questions is more complicated                              |

| Survey name                     | SURVEY DESIGN (contd.)   |   |  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                                 | Option to see survey overview / outline  | Option to include images/video clips                            | Accessibility  |
| <b>Booroo</b>                   | Only as displayed in survey editor   | Yes   | Yes  |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b>              | No   | Images can be inserted  | Section 508 compliant  |
| <b>Google Forms</b>             | No   | No  |  |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b>             | No, just a page at a time  | Can insert images or video clips                                |  |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b> | You view an overview of your survey and can expand or minimise the parts you want to work on               | Images can be inserted  | Section 508 compliant  |
| <b>PollDaddy</b>                | Yes you can go to 'Re-ordering' page which shows overview of survey and allows you to move questions/pages | Can insert images or video clips                                | Section 508 compliant  |
| <b>QuestionPro</b>              | Yes - you can see a flow-chart of how respondents will move through your survey                            | Only in paid accounts   | Surveys created through QuestionPro are Section 508 (US Federal Accessibility Guidelines) compliant                                |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b>             | Yes can go to 'organise' page which shows overview of survey and allows you to move pages                  | You can insert images or video clips                            | The website meets the requirements set by the W3C, however survey design must be kept as simple as possible to maintain compliance |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b>              | No you can only jump between pages using the dropdown from the header                                      | You can include images and video clips in all accounts.         | Meets accessibility and usability standards, such as the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act)                                       |
| <b>Survey monkey</b>            | You can see the full survey in design view but cannot see where skip logics flow to                        | You can one image per question type                             | Section 508 (US Federal Accessibility Guidelines) compliant  |
| <b>Survs</b>                    | Yes - there is a page which allows you to move your questions around by dragging them                      | Only in paid accounts   |  |
| <b>Wufoo</b>                    | No   | Only images and only those which are accessible on the internet | Section 508 compliant  |
| <b>Zoomerang</b>                | No   | You can insert images   | Not compliant with Section 508 or ADA  |

| Survey name                     | SURVEY COMPLETION   |   |  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
|                                 | Other options for survey completion                               | Options to control survey completion  | Ability to browse individual responses                   |
| <b>Booroo</b>                   | Paid accounts can download blank survey as Word or Excel document | No  | Only in paid accounts                                    |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b>              | No  | Yes   | Yes  |
| <b>Google Forms</b>             | No  | No  | No   |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b>             | Can download blank survey as Word or PDF document                 | You can prevent respondents completing survey more than once. You can also enable respondents to save and return to the survey. | Yes  |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b> | Can print off blank copy of survey                                | Respondents can decide to save and return to the survey later if they wish.   | Yes  |
| <b>PollDaddy</b>                | Via ipads   | You can prevent respondents completing survey more than once.   | Yes  |
| <b>QuestionPro</b>              | Can download blank survey as pdf or Word document                 | In free accounts, you can prevent one respondent completing the same survey more than once.                                     | Can view online or download as PDF in free account.      |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b>             | Can download blank survey as Word document                        | Only in 'pro' account   | Only in paid accounts                                    |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b>              | Can download blank survey as Word document                        | In the free account, respondents cannot save and come back to their survey  | Can view online.   |
| <b>Survey monkey</b>            | No  | You can allow multiple access to respondents in all versions  | Yes  |
| <b>Survs</b>                    | No  | Yes   | Yes  |
| <b>Wufoo</b>                    | No  | You can prevent respondents completing survey more than once.   | You can browse individual responses in the entry manager |
| <b>Zoomerang</b>                | No  | Only if the survey link is sent through Zoomerang's email system  | Yes  |

| Survey name                     | VIEWING AND USING DATA   |   |  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
|                                 | Ability to filter / cross-tabulate responses                         | Ability to export data  | Whether you can browse individual responses        |
| <b>Booroo</b>                   | Only in paid accounts  | Only in paid accounts   | Only in paid accounts                              |
| <b>eSurveysPro</b>              | Only in paid accounts  | Only in paid accounts   | Yes  |
| <b>Google Forms</b>             | Yes (as your data is presented in an Excel spreadsheet)              | Yes   | Yes  |
| <b>Kwik Surveys</b>             | Yes  | Yes to Excel, XML or CSV  | Yes  |
| <b>LimeService / LimeSurvey</b> | Yes  | Yes, to CSV, Excel, SPSS, R, Word   | Yes  |
| <b>PollDaddy</b>                | Only in paid accounts  | Only in paid accounts   | Yes  |
| <b>QuestionPro</b>              | Can do cross-tab reports online or download as PDF in free accounts. | Only in paid accounts   | Can view online or download as pdf in free account |
| <b>Smart-Survey</b>             | Only in 'pro' account  | Only in 'pro' account   | Only in paid accounts                              |
| <b>Surveygizmo</b>              | Only in paid accounts  | You can export the completed responses as a CSV file (which is compatible with Excel) in all accounts | Can view online                                    |
| <b>Survey monkey</b>            | Only available on paid accounts                                      | Only in paid accounts   | Yes  |
| <b>Survs</b>                    | Only in paid accounts  | Only in paid accounts   | Yes  |
| <b>Wufoo</b>                    | Yes  | Yes to Excel, Txt or CSV  | Yes  |
| <b>Zoomerang</b>                | Only in paid accounts  | Only in paid accounts   | Yes  |