

How to reverse score questions

Questionnaires that use a Likert scale (eg. strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) for answering questions often contain some items which are to be *reverse scored*. For example, in a self-esteem questionnaire we may have some positively worded questions (eg. I take a positive attitude toward myself), but also some negatively worded questions (eg. At times, I think I am no good at all).

In the above example, we might attribute an answer of strongly disagree with a score of 1, disagree = 2, neutral =3, agree = 4 and strongly disagree =5 for each question. This would be fine for the positively worded questions, as this would give people with high self-esteem a high score, however, we can't use the same scoring for the negatively worded questions. Instead what we do is reverse score the negatively worded questions.

Reverse scoring means that the numerical scoring scale runs in the opposite direction. So, in the above example *strongly disagree* would attract a score of 5, *disagree* would be 4, *neutral* still equals 3, *agree* becomes 2 and *strongly agree* = 1.

The same principle applies regardless of the length or wording of Likert Scale being used. For example, we might have the following 7 point scale:

Disgusting	Horrible	Unpleasant	Neutral	Pleasant	Lovely	Adorable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

...which for reverse scored questions becomes:

Disgusting	Horrible	Unpleasant	Neutral	Pleasant	Lovely	Adorable
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

After you have reverse scored the necessary items in your scale, you can then calculate the total score for your questionnaire.