



*eGuide*

# Conducting Research with Children





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Children are incredibly insightful and often surprise adults with their intuitiveness. This is especially true when it comes to market research. Just as marketing to children requires a careful approach, so to does conducting research with them.

Most companies either forgo conducting research with kids solely because of the challenge it poses or only incorporate traditional methodologies like in-person focus groups in their strategies. Today, online market research with children is still rare and only the truly innovative and kid-oriented brands attempt it. But many retailers, media firms, consumer packaged goods brands, and even technology companies could benefit from a partner who can provide a guided and accessible approach to conducting market research with children.

# Legal Implications

Legally and ethically, much more thought has to be put into the groundwork behind research with young audiences. Specifically, collecting information from children under the age of 12 is required to comply with the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

This act requires researchers to follow a specific set of rules:

- Privacy policy and/or disclosure of study subject matter must be shown to respondents (e.g., how the data is used, the length of interview (LOI), and any specific tasks required of the respondent).
- Approved consent from the child and/or parent must be obtained—often in the form of an online acknowledgement or electronic signature.





## Fielding & Panel Management

Targeting audiences and fielding studies can drastically change when conducting research with children. For example, the younger the child is, the more likely a parent will be required to assist in the study. To compensate, panel providers are required to provide higher incentives, meaning the **total cost of the project can be greater** than traditional audiences. Further, because more detailed and extensive instructions are needed, and a parent and child will need to be present together to take the study, the **fielding time can increase**. So manage expectations before taking on a research initiative with children or **consider an agile solution to prevent an increase in time and cost**.

# Applying Psychology

Executing a study with children can't be the same as with adults. Children's cognitive and social development greatly affects their actions in studies:

## **Children struggle to interpret and act with abstract thought**

Therefore, it is difficult for them to pull from past experiences or view things from other perspectives. Being cognizant of this when writing specific questions and actually avoiding projective techniques is best.

## **It's more difficult for children to stay focused**

So, survey incentives aren't enough on their own to keep kids engaged throughout a study—incorporating frequent transitions and moderator interactions can help.

## **Children don't gain a higher level of discernment until age 9**

So, those who are younger will be more likely to stay positive in a study, while those age 9 or older can be more critical of ideas.

## **The egocentric nature of children sometimes means they are more honest, but less empathetic to others**

Don't be surprised if kids tell you point-blank they don't like a concept—just make sure they aren't taking it out on anyone else in the study.





# Testing an Approach

A lot of prior study and analysis has taken place to understand children's reactions in the traditional research and focus group space, but less so in the online realm of market research. In fact, few online vendors even offer it, and even fewer with the right parameters to do so successfully. As a result, we conducted some research of our own to understand how survey design can impact responses of children, particularly, in quantitative methodologies.

In an online quantitative study of a total of n=800 children between the ages of 6 and 12, we tested the different reactions and results when it came to specific question formats. Results showed that

- Questions with images aren't always easier for children to understand than plain text
- 3-point and 5-point scales are often interpreted similarly
- Open-ended questions can be more difficult for children to answer than close-ended lists

# Why Leveraging Children's Perspective Is Important

A CPG company was looking to globally test three different concepts for a new toy line, each centered on a unique functional approach or toy trend. We launched two studies among children ages 6 to 9: a Concept Prioritizer™ and a Concept Refiner™. The children participated in the study alongside a parent.



## Findings

*Through concept testing with the Concept Prioritizer, results showed a multi-functional toy line featuring a variety of characters was statistically preferred, while other lines featuring trend-based functionality were not globally accepted among boys or girls.*

*Qualitative exploration using the Concept Refiner showed specific characters, elements, and functionality that were seen as scary or for an older audience, which identified further refinement opportunities for the line prior to final development.*

This CPG company was able to gain a deeper understanding of kids' thoughts, preferences, and desires when it came to the potential of this new toy line. In addition, parental feedback was gathered to understand overall reception and concerns. Had they not tested their concepts among children, this brand would not have known what concept resonated among both boys and girls and what improvements to the toys were needed.



# Wrapping It All Together

Taking a careful approach to conducting research with children by laying the right groundwork and utilizing these best practices means brands can more confidently—and more frequently—conduct research with kids.

Reach out to [learn more](#) about our research capabilities with different types of audiences.

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