

Survey Cover Letters

The cover letter or email invitation is an essential part of the survey. To a large degree, the cover letter will affect whether or not the respondent completes the questionnaire. It is important to maintain a friendly tone and keep it as short as possible. The importance of the cover letter should not be underestimated. It provides an opportunity to persuade the respondent to complete the survey. If the questionnaire can be completed in less than five minutes, the response rate can be increased by mentioning this in the cover letter.

The general components of a cover letter or email invitation are:

1. Describe why the study is being done (briefly).
2. Mention the incentive. (A good incentive is a copy of the results).
3. Encourage prompt response without using deadlines.
4. Briefly describe your "confidentiality/anonymity" policy.
5. Give the name and phone number and/or email address of someone they can contact with questions.

Flattering the respondent in the cover letter does not seem to affect response.

Altruism or an appeal to the social utility of a study has occasionally been found to increase response, but more often, it is not an effective motivator.

from: <http://www.statpac.com/surveys/cover-letters.htm>