

Quality Checks

Cheatsheet

At a glance

Respondents are human, and sometimes external factors can momentarily distract them during a survey. They might pause because their bus stop is approaching, a child needs attention, or they receive a phone call. Temporary distractions like these are normal, but it's important to identify respondents who were excessively distracted or disengaged, as their data may not meet quality standards and should be excluded.

To ensure your survey data is accurate and reliable, it's critical to include a range of quality checks during questionnaire design. Recommended checks include:

- Red herring/trap questions
- Logic checks
- Straight-lining checks
- Open-end checks

A robust survey incorporates multiple quality checks. Toluna Start provides automated tools such as open-end checks and copy-and-paste detection, which automatically flag and remove low-quality responses or respondents misusing the copy-paste function. Alongside these, we also recommend implementing your own manual quality checks for added rigor.

By combining automated and manual checks, you can enhance the reliability and integrity of your survey data.

Quality Checks

For surveys programmed in Toluna Start: Some quality checks are automated, while others will need to be manually added.

For surveys programmed on other platforms: Please ensure all recommended quality checks are implemented to maintain data integrity.

Automated Quality Checks in Toluna Start

In accordance with ISO 20252 section E.3.3, Toluna Start has established procedures to detect and exclude fraudulent or inattentive participants. The platform incorporates automated checks to monitor open-ended survey responses and in-survey behavior. These checks evaluate responses against specific criteria, and participants who fail to meet these standards are automatically removed from the survey.

Automated Open-End Checks:

Gibberish

- How it works: Terminates respondents as soon as they give a gibberish open end; only checks words with 4 or more letters
- Languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Malay, Portuguese, Spanish-language surveys
- Examples: 'adlh opffksjd', 'adiodoidjh', 'sskss'

Foreign Language

- How it works: Terminates respondent as soon as they give a Chinese, Hindi, or Arabic open-end text in a market where this language wouldn't be expected

Duplicate Responses

- How it works: Terminates respondents as soon as they
 - give the same open-end answer with 20 words or more as given by at least 3 other respondents within the same survey
 - give the same open-end answer with more than 3 words in a survey more than 3 times

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- give the same open-end answer with more than 9 words across more than 3 other surveys
- Ignores spaces, punctuations and cases
- Languages: All languages

Short Open-Ends

- How it works: Terminates respondents as soon as they give a response that is too short (under 3 characters) and are not dictionary words
- Languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Malay, Portuguese, Spanish-language surveys
- Examples: 'Ch', 'S', 'A2'

Copy & Paste Behavior:

- How it works: Terminates respondents as soon as they use either the copy and/or paste function on their device but within the survey browser tab. Works on keyboard shortcuts (e.g. 'ctrl + c' or 'ctrl + v'), mouse usage (e.g. 'right click + copy' or 'right click + paste'), and any code that uses copy or paste commands
- Languages: All languages

Recommended Manual Quality Checks

Although Toluna Start includes some automated quality checks, we advise incorporating the following manual checks into your survey design process. Please note that these checks are not built into the Toluna Start platform by default. Some manual checks can be implemented using logic while others require reviewing data files. If fielding time allows, we suggest conducting at least one manual data review during fieldwork (around 50% completion). This proactive approach helps clean the data early, reducing the need for extensive data cleaning at the end of fielding.

Red Herring/Trap Questions:

These questions are designed to check if respondents are paying attention and reading questions carefully.

★ *Toluna DIY Automated Solutions : These templates have built-in red herring questions.*

Recommendation: For surveys with 10-30 questions, we recommend including 2- 3 red herring questions, and for surveys with 30+ questions, 3-4 red herrings are ideal. These questions should be spaced evenly throughout the survey.

- **If a respondent fails 1 red herring:** Flag and review their responses alongside other quality checks.
- **If a respondent fails 2 or more red herrings:** Add a screen out logic to remove these respondents from the survey in real-time.

Examples of Red Herring/Trap Questions:

Individual question – set up a separate question with only one correct answer	Part of a grid – include an instruction as part of a grid question
<p>Example: Hey, are you still paying attention? Please choose the third option from the list below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green • Red • Blue • Yellow 	<p>Example: Please choose ‘completely agree’ for this statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completely disagree • Disagree • Neither agree nor disagree • Agree • Completely agree

Logic Checks:

Logic checks assess whether a respondent's answers follow a consistent and logical pattern. They help identify respondents who may not be truthful or have lost focus during the survey.

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Recommendation:

- Include several logic checks in the screener section to filter responses early.
- Place additional logic checks in the main body of the survey to maintain quality throughout.
- Review these checks post-field alongside other quality assurance measures to ensure accuracy and reliability.
- Toluna Start automatically includes a 5% oversample. If post-field cleaning results in the removal of more than 5% of the sample, please reach out to your Client Services Team.

Examples of Logic Checks:

- **Low-incidence options:** Identify unlikely responses to rare or specific questions.
- **Overstatement:** Responses that are exaggerated or impossible (e.g., claiming to have visited all the museums in the world).
- **Fake options:** Use of nonexistent brands, sports, or cities to detect inattention.
- **Inconsistencies:** Contradictory answers (e.g., saying they like a brand in one question but dislike it in another).
- **Unlikely combinations:** Responses that don't align logically (e.g., claiming to be 18 years old and have 5 children).

Overstatement checks – include a few rare items in existing question lists. If a respondent selects all the items, they may be over-stating.

Example:

Did you buy any of the following in the last 7 days?

- Bread
- Flowers
- Chocolates
- Cleaning Products
- **Car Insurance**
- **Mobile Phone**
- **DVD**
- None of these

Fake Options – include fake brands, sports, cities, etc. in question lists. If a respondent selects the fake option, they may not be paying attention

Example:

Which of the following German car brands have you heard of?

- Audi
- BMW
- Porsche
- **Pitu**
- Volkswagen
- None of these

Straight-Lining Checks:

These checks help identify respondents who may have lost focus or motivation and are simply clicking through the survey by selecting the same option repeatedly in grid questions.

Recommendation: Apply straight-lining checks on grids with 15+ items. To reduce respondent fatigue, split grids with more than 20 items into pages with at least 10 items each. If, after splitting, no grids have 15+ items, apply the check to those with 10+ items.

- If the **standard deviation is above 0.5 in two or more grids**, the respondent should be removed from the dataset.
- If the **standard deviation is above 0.5 in only one grid**, the respondent should be flagged and their responses reviewed alongside other quality checks.

Note: Only apply straight-lining checks to grids where some variation in responses is expected. For grids where it is reasonable for respondents to select the same option, these checks may not be applicable.

Manual straight-lining checks can be conducted by reviewing exported data files. The raw participant data within Toluna Analytics can be analyzed to identify individual respondents who have straight-lined their responses.

Quality Checks

If you would like to implement live straight-lining checks to remove respondents immediately during the survey, please contact your Client Services Team.

Toluna Start automatically includes a 5% oversample. If post-field cleaning results in removing more than 5% of the sample, please reach out to your Client Services Team for assistance.

Open-End Checks:

Open-end checks are used to identify respondents who may be disengaged or providing fraudulent responses. While some open-end checks are automated in Toluna Start, a thorough manual review is recommended for complete validation.

Recommended Post-Field Open-End Checks:

- Gibberish
- Foreign Language
- Duplicate Responses
- Short Open-Ended Responses
- Profanity
- Illogical Responses
- Nonsensical Responses
- Suspected AI-Generated Responses

Toluna Start automatically includes a 5% oversample. If post-field cleaning results in the removal of more than 5% of the sample, please reach out to your Client Services Team.

By combining automated tools with a comprehensive manual review, you can ensure the highest quality and reliability of open-ended survey responses.