

# RESEARCH BEST PRACTICES: How to Use Projective Techniques Effectively

## What Are Projective Techniques?

Exercises or activities that are purposely ambiguous and unstructured in nature so that beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and motivations, which may otherwise be hard for consumers to articulate, can be uncovered

**Focus areas:** Brands, products, marketing materials, and anything that might have intangible aspects to it

**Tip:** Projective techniques are especially helpful for creating respondent profiles and dividing consumers into segments



## Why Use Projective Techniques?

As online respondents become increasingly more distracted, keeping them engaged is crucial to collecting high-quality responses when conducting online research. If the questions aren't engaging, you can't expect them to elicit interesting or creative answers. Projective techniques are a way to liven up your studies and really give respondents room for creativity and expression.

## Projective Techniques...

- ✓ Add to respondent involvement by keeping them interested and engaged
- ✓ Help discern additional information about respondents' personalities and how they view the world and topic at hand
- ✓ Help reach the heart of a brand by exposing similarities and differences for differentiation
- ✓ Provide tools to describe a brand in a more opinion-based way
- ✓ Allow respondents to paint a more vivid picture for you as the researcher

# Types of Projective Techniques



## Personification

Attributing human characteristics and qualities to a brand or product.  
*Use when uncovering deeper feelings and attitudes towards brands*

## Product/Image Sort

Respondents are presented with a sample of products or images that are to be sorted into categories that make sense to them.  
*Use when you're trying to understand a category or your product's positioning*



## Storytelling

A scenario (related to the product or brand) is described, and then respondents are asked to tell a story related to that.  
*Use when you want a more thorough explanation*

## Association

Respondents are presented with a stimulus and asked to respond with the first word, image, or thoughts elicited.  
*Use when you want to know top-of-mind or unconscious reactions*



## Projective Drawing

Respondents are asked to draw a specific concept, situation, or association.  
*Use when feelings or thoughts are hard to articulate*

## Fill-in-the-Blank

An incomplete sentence, story, argument, or conversation is given to a respondent and they are asked to finish it in their own words.  
*Use when you want to add a bit more structure and guidance*

**This reminds me of \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_.**



## Third-Party Projections

Respondents are asked to describe what other people feel, believe, think, do, etc., as opposed to the respondents answering it about themselves.  
*Use for potentially sensitive topics or when you want to receive open feedback*

## Role Playing

Respondents are asked to assume a role (e.g., the CEO or product manager) and respond to a situation from the standpoint of their role.  
*Use when you want more detailed answers with more ownership*



## Creative Innovation: Role Playing

Respondents are asked to assume a role related to innovation (e.g., scientist); they're encouraged to create something (e.g., product, messaging, design, etc.) themselves and describe it in full detail.  
*Use for more innovative or exploratory topics*

# Key Takeaways

Projective techniques are an art, not a science.

Allow respondents to fully articulate their feelings by giving them different ways to express themselves and share their opinions.

Respondents want to be engaged. They want to be helpful. Give them an opportunity to be.

Get creative. Do not be afraid to try different types of questions and watch the type of answers vary. You'll slowly learn which questions your target audience responds well to and which ones don't work as well.

## Examples from Real Research Studies:

### Personification

Describe Brand X as a person in terms of what they like, what kind of car they drive, what they do in their free time, etc.

**Why it works:** Answers go from just "Brand X is innovative" to "Brand X is a cool, nerdy hipster who rides his bike to work to save the environment, and likes to read blogs and build creative tech things in his spare time."

### Projective Drawing

Draw a picture of the person or family who would use this product, including their house and car.

**Why it works:** You can ask what type of person a product is made for, but it can be hard for a respondent to give a detailed, thought out answer, especially later in the study. With a drawing, respondents often add more details and nuances than if they were using words alone.

### Storytelling

Imagine you are explaining a tablet to an alien who has just landed on earth and knows absolutely nothing about our world. Describe a tablet to him or her.

**Why it works:** Answers go from "It's a device that lets me play apps" to "Hi, little alien! A tablet is a piece of technology that connects to the internet and allows people to play games, look up information, or watch movies by touching the screen. It's easy to use it at other places besides just your home."

### Fill-in-the-Blank

Let's talk about how your family uses calendars. Fill in the blank: "My child gets most excited to put \_\_\_\_\_ on the calendar."

**Why it works:** Rather than asking how the child feels about the calendars and receiving a wide range of answers, this directs it in a way that allows you to capture specific activities.

## About GutCheck

GutCheck is a global, online agile market research solution that enables our clients to get quick consumer reads to address business questions, whenever they need to be answered. GutCheck's flexible quantitative and qualitative platform enables us to instantly recruit target audiences, and our full-service team provides the insights and confidence our customers need to react and move their businesses forward. For more information: <http://gutcheckit.com>.



633 17th Street, Suite 1300  
Denver, CO 80202  
877-990-8111  
[info@gutcheckit.com](mailto:info@gutcheckit.com)

FIND US ON

