Chapter 9 Rubin & Babbie (2008)
Constructing Measurement Instruments

Guidelines for asking questions:

- can use both questions and statements
- can use both open-ended and closed-ended questions (closed ended responses should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive)
- make items clear (avoid jargon)
- avoid double-barreled questions
- make sure respondents are competent and willing to answer
- make sure questions are relevant
- short items are better
- avoid negative items
- avoid biased items and terms
- use culturally sensitive items

Many item formats are available (all questionnaires should be uncluttered and spread out, with appropriate response format)

- open-ended, closed-ended, dichotomous, multiple-choice
- contingency (if yes, then...)
- matrix (several items with identical response choices)
- Likert (agree-disagree)
- semantic differential (rate along a particular dimension)

Additional considerations

- attend to the order of items in an instrument
- make sure that instructions are clear and complete
- pre-test an instrument whenever possible
- when selecting items for an instrument, consider 1) face validity, 2) unidimensionality, and 3) the range of likely responses
- attempt to construct culturally sensitive instruments (e.g. attend to language and use translators, bilingual interviewers, translation, back-translation, direct immersion in the culture, and knowledgeable informants)
- be aware that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used in a single instrument and share certain principles (e.g. concern for reliability and validity), but that these approaches also differ in significant ways