

**This guide covers:**

- Testing and previewing an existing survey
- Distributing your survey with a general URL (public survey)
- How to add a QR code to use your survey at in-person events

*This guide discusses how to test/distribute an existing survey.  
For assistance on how to create a survey, please see our separate guide.*

In general, always test the wording & formatting of  
your survey prior to distribution.



## How to Preview a Public Survey

The screenshot displays the REDCap Online Designer interface for a project named 'Sandbox' (PID 5983). The interface is divided into a left sidebar and a main content area. The sidebar contains several sections: 'Project Home and Design', 'Data Collection', 'Applications', and 'Help & Information'. The 'Data Collection' section is expanded, and the 'Survey Distribution Tools' option is highlighted with a blue box and a circled '2'. An orange arrow labeled '1' points to the 'Online Designer' tab in the top navigation bar. The main content area shows the 'Online Designer' view for a 'Survey Title' instrument. It includes a 'Record ID' field, a question 'What is your favorite color?' with a dropdown menu, and another question 'Why is the above your favorite color?' with a text input field. The interface also features various toolbars and buttons for managing the instrument.

While in the 'Online Designer' of your survey, select 'Survey Distribution Tools' in the left-side bar



## How to Preview a Public Survey

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Click on 'Open public survey'

Your survey preview will open in a new browser tab.

The screenshot shows the REDCap interface for a project named 'Sandbox' (PTD 5983). The left sidebar contains navigation menus for 'My Projects', 'Project Home and Design', 'Data Collection', 'Applications', and 'Help & Information'. The 'Data Collection' menu is expanded, showing 'Survey Distribution Tools' as the selected option. The main content area displays the 'Survey Distribution Tools' section, which includes a 'Public Survey Link' tab. Below the tab, there is explanatory text about using a public survey link, a 'Public Survey URL' field with a copy icon, and a checkbox for 'Protect the public survey using the Google reCAPTCHA feature'. Under the 'Link Actions' heading, the 'Open public survey' button is highlighted with an orange box. Other buttons include 'Log out', 'Send me URL via email', and 'Survey Access Code or QR Code'. The 'Link Customizations' section contains buttons for 'Get Short Survey Link', 'Create Custom Survey Link', and 'Get Embed Code'.



## How to Preview a Public Survey

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**We suggest sending the survey to another individual (or two) to test your survey wording & formatting prior to distribution.**

Click on the copy/paste icon to the right of the URL (or highlight & copy the URL) then paste it in the body of an email. Send this email to the people you want to test your survey with.

**Best Practice:** Be sure to test any branching logic that you added to your survey before distributing. We also suggest instructing your testers to write “test” in the name (or another field) to clearly indicate test responses when you download the results of your survey. You can also delete test responses prior to distributing your survey to your audience.

The screenshot shows the REDCap interface for a project named 'Sandbox' (PTD 5983). The left sidebar contains navigation menus for 'Project Home and Design', 'Data Collection', 'Applications', and 'Help & Information'. The 'Data Collection' menu is expanded, showing 'Survey Distribution Tools' as the active section. The main content area displays the 'Survey Distribution Tools' interface with three tabs: 'Public Survey Link', 'Participant List', and 'Survey Invitation Log'. The 'Public Survey Link' tab is selected, showing a text area with the 'Public Survey URL' and a copy icon to its right. The URL is highlighted with an orange box. Below the URL, there is a checkbox for 'Protect the public survey using the Google reCAPTCHA feature'. The 'Link Actions' section includes buttons for 'Open public survey', 'Open public survey + Log out', 'Send me URL via email', and 'Survey Access Code or QR Code'. The 'Link Customizations' section includes buttons for 'Get Short Survey Link', 'Create Custom Survey Link', and 'Get Embed Code'.



## How to Distribute a Public Survey

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The screenshot shows the 'Survey Distribution Tools' section of a web interface. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Public Survey Link', 'Participant List', and 'Survey Invitation Log'. Below the tabs is a paragraph explaining that using a public survey link is the simplest and fastest way to collect responses, and that responses are collected anonymously. A note states that since this method uses a single survey link for all participants, it allows for the possibility of participants taking the survey multiple times. Below this text is a text box labeled 'Public Survey URL:' containing the URL 'https://redcap.nubic.northwestern.edu/redcap/surveys/?s=CF...' and a copy icon. A checkbox labeled 'Protect the public survey using the Google reCAPTCHA feature' is present below the URL. The interface is divided into two columns: 'Link Actions' and 'Link Customizations'. The 'Link Actions' column contains buttons for 'Open public survey', 'Open public survey + Log out', and 'Embed URL in email'. The 'Link Customizations' column contains buttons for 'Get Short Survey Link', 'Create Custom Survey Link', and 'Get Embed Code'. Two callouts are present: a blue circle with the number '1' pointing to the 'Public Survey URL' text box, and a blue circle with the number '2' pointing to the 'Survey Access Code or QR Code' button.

**1** Public Survey URL: <https://redcap.nubic.northwestern.edu/redcap/surveys/?s=CF...>

Protect the public survey using the Google reCAPTCHA feature [?](#)

**2** Survey Access Code or QR Code

Under **Survey Distribution Tools**, copy/paste the **survey URL** into the email or other message you plan on sending out to your prospective respondents. Remember, public surveys are the same survey sent to everyone. See our guide for individual surveys if you want separate surveys sent to each person.

The **QR code** option is helpful for in-person events like fairs or presentations. You can print out the QR code or add it to a PowerPoint slide for people to point their smartphone camera at then complete the survey on their device. This option is ideal for gathering contact information or event feedback.

**See our other guides to learn more foundational REDCap and Data Management skills**

