

Collecting Data on Your Own Life starting Monday January 30, **due Monday, February 27**

The “quantified self” has gotten a lot of attention in the last few years, as the FitBit and similar devices and apps have taken off in popularity. But people have been keeping track of various kinds of data about themselves probably for as long as they’ve been keeping track of anything, even if they haven’t thought about it exactly in terms of data.

Please track something about yourself/your life **every day on at least 14 days** between now and Monday, February 27.

- Part of the idea of this assignment is to discuss results with the class, so **please choose something that you will be willing to share with others** in the context of the classroom.
- The expectation of this class is that you will not share data collected for and discussed in class with people outside of this class without explicit permission of the data collectors and subjects.
- You may do initial data gathering non-digitally, but you will need to report your data through a Google form into a Google spreadsheet (see attached instructions). You should make sure to record your data every day; otherwise it is easy to forget.
- Consider taking a day or two to explore how you will collect data on yourself (how will you note it down? Will you have enough data? What information is interesting?) before you start on the 14 days of collecting -- see Giorgia Lupi’s insights into her [data collection process](#).

What to collect? It’s up to you! It could be something very quantifiable -- how many minutes you spend doing something (Homework? Texting? Exercising?) or how many times you open a door or turn on or off a light each day. Or you could track things like what colors of socks and tops you wear every day (do they match?) or flavors that you eat during the day/week, or songs that you listen to, or words that you say. It will be more interesting, and you will have more to visualize later, if you correlate one kind of data with another. Possible additional factors to track: Where? At what time? With what emphasis or emotion? What’s the weather like, or the temperature? Are you alone or with friends? etc. (See attached instructions for example.)

Looking for inspiration? Check out the project [Dear Data](#), conducted by information designers Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec (or other [projects](#) that it inspired). [Every week](#) each of them gathered personal data on the same topic and made a drawing of their data on a postcard to send to the other. If you want, team up with someone else in the class and collect data on the same topic, so that you can compare it later. Nicholas Felton’s various [personal annual reports](#) (2005-2014) could also spark some ideas.

In choosing what data about yourself to collect, please consider what your argument would be for **why this is interesting** or **how it would help you tell a story** about yourself and your life in February 2017.

Data collection instructions

tl;dr: Make a folder for yourself here: <https://goo.gl/6x9kIF>. Label that folder with your name, and within that folder create a form to collect your data, and a responses spreadsheet to show the data as you collect it. Set privacy settings for your folder and your responses spreadsheet to “view only” for others.

In detail:

In the [Google folder Thinking Digitally Data](#), create a folder for yourself (with your name). Within that folder, create a form by clicking on the blue “NEW” button, choosing “More,” and then clicking on the purple Google forms icon.

Set up a form to collect the data you want. For example, suppose you want to track what music you listened to and how you felt while listening. What different categories of data do you want? You should be tracking more than just which Pandora station or playlist you are listening to – that may not be very interesting to visualize later.

- Some options: time of day, kind of music, tempo, where you are, who is with you, your emotion at the time (or before/after!), are you listening alone (on headphones, in your own room) or with others, is it a recording or live, on a playlist that you set up or one that is generated by a radio station or Pandora-type service, etc. etc.

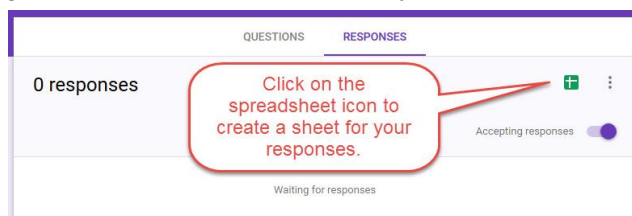
You probably don’t want to gather ALL of these factors, because that could make gathering your data quite time-consuming. But you may want to gather a few different ones, so that you can explore interesting correlations in your data.

The image shows a screenshot of the Google Forms editor interface. The top bar is purple and contains the text "Untitled form" and "All changes saved in Drive". Below this, there are tabs for "QUESTIONS" and "RESPONSES". The main area is white and contains a form titled "Untitled form" with a "Form description" field. Below the description is a "Question" field with two radio button options: "Option 1" and "Add option or ADD 'OTHER'". To the right of the form is a menu of question types: "Short answer", "Paragraph", "Multiple choice", "Checkboxes", "Dropdown", "File upload", "Linear scale", "Multiple choice grid", "Date", and "Time". Three red callout boxes with white text provide instructions: "Don't forget to give your form a meaningful title" points to the form title; "Choose question type from this menu." points to the question type menu; and "Add another question with the plus button" points to a plus sign icon in the top right corner of the form area.

On the form you can choose what kind of question you ask: multiple choice, checkboxes or dropdown for categories that you set up ahead of time, and short answer or paragraph for full text options. Multiple choice lets you choose only one option. I chose multiple choice for “Where am I?” because I can’t be in more than one place at a time. Checkbox lets you choose more than one thing; it’s a good idea for categories where more than one answer can apply. (On my form, “What kind of music am I listening to?” includes both genre and how it is being played, so checkbox makes sense. But I could decide to separate those two categories into two multiple choice questions instead, if I wanted to.) I decided to use short answer for “How do I feel?” but you could also use multiple choice/checkbox/pulldown, if you think that will work better. Include date and time, so that you can provide the date and time of the event you’re recording. (The form will automatically record the time when you fill in the form, so it will also be clear if you fill in all of your data at once at the end. That is not a good plan -- unless you can show a physical data log that you transcribed in, it will look like you made up your data, and that is unethical.)

You can require some categories and not require others. In the example form, I chose to require date, time, and what kind of music am I listening to – these are quick and easy to fill in, and give at least a baseline of information. Specific artist/song I don’t want to make required, because I may not know, if I’m listening to someone else’s music! (I suppose there is an app for that...). You can change the order of questions by dragging them around.

Once you have decided on all the questions and their order and are happy with your form, click over to responses (instead of questions) and then click on the green spreadsheet icon to generate a sheet to hold all of your responses.



You don’t want to do this until after you have finalized the form, because if you make changes to the form after you have started collecting responses, weird things happen to the columns on the spreadsheet. If you decide after you have been collecting data for more than a day that you need to change the questions you are asking, it’s better to make a new form, give it a clear title that indicates that it is version 2, and make a new responses spreadsheet. Then you can reconcile the old and new data categories by hand later.

Set privacy settings for your response sheet to “View only,” to protect your data from changes. (*You* will still be able to change it on the spreadsheet.)

You can enter data by hitting the Preview button from inside your form, but it’s probably easiest to get the URL to the form and then set up a bookmark in a browser on your computer or a link with your phone.

How to Make a Home Screen Icon for Google Forms on Your Smartphone

On an iOS (Apple) Device:

1. Send *yourself* the link to your own Google Form via email.
2. On your phone, open up Safari and load your Google Form from the URL you emailed yourself. (I know this is *really hard*, but after you learn this shortcut you'll never have to copy this URL again so don't worry.)
3. At the bottom of the screen you'll see an icon depicting an arrow that looks like it's trying to get away from a square. This represents the never-ending struggle between the pursuant rectangular form and the chased arrowhead form. It also represents tapping a button to perform an action, which is more applicable in this case. So tap this button.
4. If you managed to tap that button successfully, you'll have a few options. The one you want to tap is "Add to Home Screen". So do that.
5. You'll be asked to choose a name for the homescreen icon. So, you know, pick a good one and save it, like "My Form." When you're done it'll show up on your homescreen and you'll never have to type in that stupid URL *ever again*.

On an Android (Samsung, etc) Device

1. Send yourself the link to your own Google Form via email.
2. Open Firefox for Android and load your Google Form from the URL you emailed yourself.
3. Press the Menu button (either [below the screen on some devices](#) or at the top-right corner of the browser) , then tap on Page.
4. Tap Add to Home Screen.
5. Your shortcut should now appear on your home screen.
6. **Tip:** If you want to change the label on your shortcut, [bookmark](#) that page first, then change its title on the *Edit Bookmark* window. On the *Bookmarks* panel, do a long tap on that site and choose Add to Home Screen.

(You can do essentially the same thing with Chrome -- open the form in the Chrome browser, and then go to the menu at the top right of the browser and choose Add to Home Screen.)

Questions?

Colin Justin

Whitman College Technology Services

justinkm@whitman.edu

x4760

Shamelessly plagiarized from Adam Dachis @ Liferhacker.com and support.mozilla.org.

<https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/how-add-shortcut-website-android>

<http://liferhacker.com/5809338/add-web-site-bookmarks-to-your-iphones-homescreen>