

REPORT CARD & STORE TRACKING SURVEY

How to make your observations:

There are two ways to make direct observations.

One is to be very upfront about what you are doing. It is perfectly OK to go into the stores with a clipboard and the Report Card and record your answers in a very open and matter-of-fact way. You can use the **sample script** to the store to help you explain the purpose of your visit. If a clerk or manager asks you what you are doing, simply explain your project and continue your work. Nothing you will be doing is against the law. However, be aware that some storeowners may be uncomfortable with observers taking written notes in their stores and ask you to leave. We recommend you always comply with the clerk's request.

The second way to make direct observations is "under cover". This involves being discreet, so as not to alert others that the observation is taking place. This requires some practice, but can work very well. In either case, we recommend that observers have a letter of introduction. Explaining that you are gathering data for a research study can help to calm the fears of store staff.

Be careful of two problems when making direct observations:

- 1) Remembering what you see and
- 2) Recording the data correctly.

Do not rely on your memory and leave a store without writing down all the information. There is a lot to look for and one person just can't remember everything. If you choose to make your observations "undercover", you can make a "cheat sheet" with a list of the items you need to observe and then transfer the information to the Report Card once you get outside. However you decide to collect this information, fill out the Report Card and check it for errors before moving on to the next store. Always be sure that all information on the Report Card is accurate and complete. Working with a partner may make the job easier. You can divide up the interior observations to get them done quickly. And remember that stores are busy places – we don't want to bother storeowners or customers.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

We are conducting a research project regarding tobacco displays and advertising. This study requires us to make observations in various retail outlets. The information that we gather is confidential and will be combined into statistical reports without any mention of your store name or location.

The data collectors visiting your establishment will make these observations without disrupting your work or your customers and will be in your store for only a few minutes.

Please accept our appreciation for your cooperation.