

**Transcript of:** Project Field Types

**Video production date:** October 8, 2012

**Video length:** 4:01

**REDCap version featured:** 4.14.5 (standard branch)

**Author:** Veida Elliott, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Institute for Clinical and Translational Research

*Audio is in normal text below. Timestamps are in bold to assist in finding specific topics.*

**(0:00)**

When building REDCap data collection instruments, you must define both the questions or descriptive text and the corresponding fields to capture data. There are several field types available. Almost any kind of data can be captured using these fields. Let's use the Online Designer to explore a few of the most commonly-used field types.

Text boxes and notes boxes are blank fields for typing alpha-numeric data. Each field can contain thousands of characters, but will only display a limited number of characters on the screen. REDCap offers several validation options for text boxes. Validation is a way to ensure that data is entered in a certain format, improving data quality.

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Two of the most popular multiple choice field types are radio buttons and dropdown boxes. When using these field types, you must define codes associated with each answer choice. The code is usually a number. It's how the data is actually stored. In some multiple choice questions, the codes are automatically assigned for you and cannot be modified.

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Checkboxes are a special type of multiple choice question. This field allows the selection of multiple answer choices. Although the checkbox looks much like a radio or dropdown field, the data is stored very differently. Take time to test the reports and exports to explore how checkbox data are structured.

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Another type of multiple choice question is the matrix field. This field type allows a set of answer choices to be re-used for a list of questions. The resulting grid or matrix is a concise way to capture data. Matrix fields can be single-choice/radio or multiple choice/checkbox. Just as in other multiple choice questions, the answer choices

are assigned codes, and each line in the matrix has a unique variable name. The matrix field is another powerful feature in REDCap that should be tested thoroughly while in development mode.

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REDCap has a few other special field types with unique functionality. To explore these, let's move now to the real data collection instrument. The section header helps format the visual appearance of an instrument. It also takes on additional functionality in a survey project by segmenting a survey into multiple pages. A descriptive field allows you to upload a file that your users can view or download. Similarly, a file field allows a user to upload their own file for you to download. A slider scale captures data on a scale of 0-100.

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Lastly, calculated fields are used to perform calculations based on other data in a record. Variable names are used to define an equation. Once the data for those variables has been entered, REDCap will execute the calculation and display the calculated value on the form. This field type is certainly one to test thoroughly before beginning real data collection.

Remember, creating and refining instruments is a primary goal while in development mode. Both the Online Designer and Data Dictionary methods of project modification can be used to add or modify fields. The field type names used in the Data Dictionary are very similar to those used in the Online Designer. Although fields can still be modified in production mode, it is critical to fully define and test your data collection strategy before beginning real data collection.