

# The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods

## THURSTONE SCALE

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Book Title: The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods

Chapter Title: "THURSTONE SCALE"

Pub. Date: 2006

Access Date: January 16, 2014

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Ltd

City: London

Print ISBN: 9780761962984

Online ISBN: 9780857020116

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9780857020116>

Print page: 302

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## Definition

An attitude scale with equal-appearing intervals. It was developed by Thurstone in 1928 to measure attitudes towards the church in the United States.

## Distinctive Features

Thurstone scaling starts by generating an item pool comprising approximately one hundred statements, for example in terms of Thurstone's research 'I think that the church represents everything that is good in society'. A group of 'judges' (not in a judicial sense) is selected on grounds of representativeness and typicality. Each judge is asked to sort the statements into a set number of piles (for example seven) according to their favourableness to the attitude in question (for example, attitude towards the church). The piles are sorted as if they are equally spaced, say from 1 to 7. The researcher retains those statements on which the judges agree regarding the allocation to piles. These are then embodied in a questionnaire, in random order, and respondents are asked to agree or disagree with them. The scale score for any individual is the average of all of the statements with which he or she agrees.

## Evaluation

The advantage of a Thurstone scale is that the procedure is simple insofar as it requires no scoring or judging of distances. Respondents simply have to indicate with which statements they agree. The criticism of the use of the scale is that the characteristics of the judges and the underlying dimensions of their attitudes may be significantly different from those of the respondents and yet the former determine the construction of the scale which is used to measure the attitudes of the respondents.

Victor Jupp

*Associated Concepts:*

- [composite measurement](#)
- [indicator](#)
- [Likert scale](#)
- [scaling](#)
- [semantic differential technique](#)
- [summated rating scale](#)

### Key Readings

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