

Basic Skills for Handling Questions

Setting and using Q & A rules

If the chairperson does *not* explain the Q & A rules, then tell the audience when they'll have the chance to ask questions, e.g. spell out the Q & A rules at the end of the introduction in your talk.

Dealing with questions

<i>Your job as presenter</i>	<i>And its related body language</i>
<i>Appreciate the interest</i>	<i>Smile</i> <i>Move closer to the person</i> <i>Make eye contact</i> <i>Nod</i>
<i>Relax</i>	<i>Keep your arms and hands relaxed</i>
<i>Pay attention</i>	<i>Stand quietly without fidgeting</i> <i>Maintain full eye contact</i> <i>Stand with enough energy to reflect attentiveness (e.g. no slouching, hanging on tables or chairs, or fidgeting)</i>
<i>Keep an open mind</i>	<i>Smile or keep a straight face (even when you disagree)</i> <i>Here are some actions to avoid</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Raising your eyebrows</i> • <i>Scratching your head</i> • <i>Breaking into a sarcastic grin, or otherwise showing disdain or superiority</i> • <i>Crossing your arms</i>

Handling questions

Four basic steps

- 1 **Stop and think**
Do you really understand the question? Know the answer?
- 2 **Acknowledge and rephrase the question if needed**
This is useful since some people might not have heard the question or understood a longwinded question
- 3 **Give a simple answer first**
This may be all that's needed, and that's what an audience expects
- 4 **Expand on your answer no more than necessary**
If more detail is needed, the audience will let you know. Avoid repeating your points.

Handling hostile questions

Four basic steps

- 1 Make eye contact, listen, and maintain positive body language
Maintain a sense of humor, stay calm and friendly
- 2 Rephrase the question to make it objective and to set positive ground for answering
If necessary, ask clarifying questions to uncover the exact objection or question
Avoid aggressive responses, such as "I disagree"
- 3 Answer briefly, *turning to others* in the audience
- 4 Immediately take questions from others in the audience