

Tips for Using and Answering Questions

- Asking them:
 - Plan them; know what you are going to ask and when in your presentation you are going to do so.
 - Know the purpose of each question. Are you eliciting information or an opinion?
 - Go from general questions to more specific ones.
 - Confine the questions to one topic area at a time.
 - Ask short, clear questions that are easy to understand.
 - Ask the group first, individuals second.
 - Do not interrupt a person who is responding to a question.
- Answering them:
 - Listen for both intent (what is meant) and content (what is being asked).
 - Acknowledge each question; repeat or paraphrase each to show that you understand or get clarification.
 - Try to answer completely and accurately. Address answer to the whole audience; do not focus on only the questioner, but verify the questioner's satisfaction.
 - Avoid these behaviors when answering questions:
 - Being unresponsive; do not ignore anybody.
 - Showing that you think the question is inappropriate or stupid.
 - Diverting the question. If at all possible, answer the questions as they come up.
 - Going off on a tangent. Do not say, "This reminds of a time..." and tell a 10-minute war story. By the time you finish, nobody will remember the question.
 - Treating two questions as one. Even if two people ask similar questions, answer each separately.