

Question and Answer Tips

The question-and-answer, also known as a Q&A, is a type of impromptu speaking that is directed by questions from members of the audience. Question and answer sessions can be planned or spur of the moment.

Here are some tips for a successful Q&A session:

Be well prepared. Think about all possible questions the audience members could ask. Predict which issues will be most important to your audience, and practice answering questions pertaining to those issues.

Call on members in order. When you call on any questioners in the audience, call on them in order. If possible, recognize audience members with questions by their name.

Take notes. Keep a pen and note card at the podium or somewhere near you to write down questions with multiple parts.

Repeat or rephrase the question. Other members in the audience may not have heard the question, so it is helpful to repeat the question. Repeating the question can also give you time to formulate an answer to the question, as well as making sure you heard the question correctly.

Be direct, specific, and brief. When you answer a question, it should be no longer than 3 sentences long. Your response can be longer if the question is very technical.

Take your time. Don't be afraid to pause while formulating an answer. When answering a question, introduce the response, make a connection, and then begin speaking.

Address the entire audience. Audience members frequently ask questions about their own personal situations. Instead of just addressing the personal situation, answer a broader question related to the theme that would be of interest to the audience as a whole.

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Make eye contact. Initially make eye contact with the questioner in the audience. Then, move your gaze across the audience. This helps you maintain eye contact with everyone in the audience rather than just the questioner.

“I don’t know.” Don’t be afraid to tell the audience “I don’t know” if you don’t know the answer to a question. Being honest is a better option than giving a guess or possibly false information. If possible, point the audience member to resources for more information.

Look for a reaction. After answering the question, look for a reaction from the person who asked the question to make sure you have answered the question. If they seem confused, elaborate on your answer.

Answer with confidence. Most importantly, answer each question with confidence. Remember this is your project, and you know the most about your topic.