WHAT IS A GOOD QUESTION?

We ask questions to get answers. So a good question gets the answer you are looking for.

How? A good question is clear and concise. There should be no mistake or confusion about what you are asking.

Questions should be challenging - and sometimes tough - in order to get vital information.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

The yes/ no question

This is a question that only requires a yes or no answer. It’s best used when you want someone to admit to something. eg: Did you order soldiers to fire on protestors?

Use this type of question carefully. Don’t ask a question that allows the person to answer yes or no unless you are looking for a yes/no answer!

The information question

This is a question you use to find out information on the topic. eg: you may want someone to explain a point/ issue etc.

The challenge question

It is a question that challenges the person to answer for their record or actions. It is often tough and direct. You are not allowing them to say whatever they want. You are demanding they answer a very specific question.

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It should be based on facts and research. By researching in advance, you can be prepared to challenge accordingly. Much of the value of this type of questioning comes from laying evidence in front of an official and having him/her address it in public. Even if you don't get an admission or confession, you have held the person to account.

The follow up question

Ask another question if you don’t initially get your answer. Keep asking! But know what you are going to ask.
HOW TO STRUCTURE A QUESTION

- **DESTINATION**: First, ask yourself what information and I looking for - what is your destination? Only when you know your destination will you be able to construct your question.

- **RESEARCH**: Know your subject. In most cases to ask a good question, you need some background information on the topic. So, do some reading or find out more about the topic before you ask a question.

- **FACTS**: if you are challenging someone, make sure you have your facts right to get the maximum impact. It is easy for someone to say “that’s not right” and you won’t be able to counter that unless you know the facts!

- **CLEAR AND CONCISE**: Make sure your questions are short and clear to avoid any confusion.

- **CONFIDENCE**: if you do all of those things, you should be confident in asking your question.

- **THE KEY QUESTION WORDS**: Here are some key words journalists use to get answers: Who. What. Where. When. Why. How. They are effective words to use in questions.

Perhaps it is best to look at what **not to do** when asking a question:

Avoid: “What do you think?”; “What do you have to say about that?” or “What’s your opinion?” These phrases allow the person to say whatever they want and avoid answering your question. be more direct.

Don’t ask more than one question at a time, because you allow the person to avoid answer your toughest question. You are giving them a chance to ignore what they want and talk about anything. Pick your best question and ask that!

Be unclear. The person needs to understand what you are asking. Why ask a long question when a shorter one would work better?

Be unprepared! Remember to do some research and reading so you know about the topic.

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