

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Preparing for your session

Question and answer sessions are a crucial part of any program. Speakers' answers reinforce key points and ensure understanding while allowing the participants the opportunity to engage directly with presenters. To ensure a successful Q&A session it is important to prepare in advance.

Steps for a successful Q&A

- At the beginning of your session, inform the participants of when you will be addressing questions and provide clear instructions on the format. Specify whether the questions should be submitted via an online chat box, ahead of time, or in person at a designated microphone.
- Anticipate potential questions and formulate clear, concise responses ahead of time.
- Prepare questions to use in the event the audience does not immediately have questions. These should be used to highlight key points or emphasize important issues. A good way to start is by saying, "Something I am frequently asked is"
- Develop a strategy for responding to questions that are lengthy, highly specific, and/or irrelevant to a broader audience. Consider whether you will provide your contact information or make yourself available after the presentation.
- Always start by repeating the question and thanking the participant.
- Be aware of recent news or trends related to your topic.
- To wrap up the session, have a statement ready that reinforces your main points.

Tips for Difficult Questions

- When faced with a challenging or potentially loaded question, seek to understand the intent by asking clarifying questions, for example, "What makes you ask that?" You can also empathize and redirect. Example, "New regulations can be frustrating; is there a specific aspect you would like to discuss?"
- If one individual is monopolizing the time, offer to speak with them later, indicating that you would like to give everyone an opportunity to ask questions.
- If it is a story or comment rather than a question, acknowledge the comment and move on. Example, "Thank you so much for sharing that. Who else has a question?"
- For an off-topic question, simply indicate that the question is out of the scope of today's topic.
- If a participant wants to argue or disprove you, acknowledge the comment and move on. For example, "Thank you for sharing your viewpoint; there is always more than one way to look at a topic." Another option is finding something in common. An example of this would be, "I think we can both agree this is an important and challenging topic."