

Chapter 9: ‘Any questions?’

“I have never met a man so ignorant that I couldn’t learn something from him.”
– Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), Italian physicist, astronomer and philosopher

Tip 258: Decide how to handle questions	Essential
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In certain situations the chairperson will decide how the audience will ask any questions arising from your presentation. If you have any choice in this, take a moment to decide how you will handle questions.

You may want to invite your audience to interrupt and ask questions as and when they occur. The advantage of this is that your audience will feel free to interact with you, and your presentation will have a freer exchange of thoughts and opinions. The disadvantage of this strategy is that you and your audience may lose the flow of the presentation. Also, the questions that your audience asks may be answered later in your presentation.

An alternative technique for taking questions is to invite them all at the end. The advantage of this is that questions will not interrupt the flow of your presentation. Also, some questions which arise during your presentation will be naturally answered in the course of the presentation itself.

You may want to take questions directly from your audience, or ask them to write questions down and send them to the front.

In either case, make sure you give all members of your audience a chance to ask questions. If you cannot answer all the questions in the time available, make yourself available for question after the presentation, or provide your contact details so that people can write, phone or meet you at a later date.

Tip 259: Repeat the question if necessary	Intermediate
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You must understand the question that is being asked. If you did not hear the question, do not hesitate to ask the questioner to repeat the question. If you do not understand the question, try asking the questioner for clarification or to re-phrase the question. You may want to rephrase the question yourself to check you have understood it correctly.

If someone asks a question in a large audience without using a microphone or if your presentation is being taped, you will need to repeat the question, possibly paraphrasing it for brevity.