
Handling Questions

- Always listen to the entire question before you respond, else you might actually respond with an answer that has nothing to do with the intent of the question.
- Repeat the question out loud to ensure the entire class heard the question. It is a good idea to paraphrase the question when you repeat it so the participant asking the question can verify that you understand the question. Lastly, repeating the question also gives you a few more seconds to process the question and form an appropriate answer.
- Give credit to the participant for asking the question. Saying “Thank you for asking” or “I’m glad you asked that” acknowledges the participant and will probably encourage others to speak up.
- Before moving on, verify that you answered the question to the participant’s satisfaction. You might ask something like “Does that answer your question?” or “Is that what you were looking for?” If the participant says “No” then allow them the chance to clarify their question.
- It is perfectly alright to postpone answering a question. Perhaps the group does not yet have enough foundational information to understand the question or the answer. Perhaps the question will be answered during an upcoming topic in the class. Ask the participant to write the question down so it is not forgotten. Remind them if they still have the same question after the topic is complete, you will answer the question then. If answering the question would be too time-consuming and not relevant to the course objectives, ask the participant if you could address the question privately with them on a break or after class.
- It is also perfectly alright to admit that you do not know an answer. If this is the case, tell the group that you will find an answer and get back with them later. Then, do so.
- An effective method for collecting questions or ideas that you are not prepared to address immediately is to establish a “parking lot.” The parking lot might be a simple piece of butcher paper where the questions are recorded. The parking lot should be posted in clear view of the class participants, not a private note visible to the instructor only. Be sure to process all items in your parking lot before closing your class. Even if the question is not yet answered at the end of the class, confirm with the group how and when you will deliver the information to them.