

# The Pros and Cons of Open and Closed Questions

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## **Closed Questions Usually Start With**

- Can
- Did
- Will
- Have

## **Advantages of Closed Questions**

- Sometimes they're easier and quicker for people to answer
- The answers of different respondents are easier to compare
- Peoples' answers are easier to analyze
- Response choices can clarify the question's meaning for respondents
- People are more likely to answer about sensitive topics
- They inspire fewer irrelevant or clouded answers
- Less articulate or less literate respondents are not at a disadvantage
- replication is easier
- They allow the interpreter to assess guests' prior knowledge base and feelings

## **Disadvantages of Closed Ended**

- They can evoke ideas that the respondent would not otherwise have
- Respondents with no opinion or no prior knowledge may not answer
- Peoples can be frustrated because their desired answer is not a choice or because they may not know the right answer
- It becomes confusing if many response choices are offered
- Misinterpretation of a question can go unnoticed
- Distinctions between people's answers may be blurred
- Giving the wrong answer is possible and often probable
- They force people to give simplistic responses to complex issues
- They compel people to make choices they would not otherwise make

### Open Questions Usually Start With

- How
- Why
- What
- When
- Where

### Advantages of Open Questions

- They facilitate an unlimited number of possible answers
- They allow respondents to answer in detail and qualify, and clarify responses
- Unanticipated conclusions can be discovered
- They allow adequate answers to complex issues
- They inspire creativity, self-expression, and richness of detail
- They reveal a respondent's logic, thinking process, and frame of reference
- Because there is often no right or wrong answer, respondents feel more comfortable answering

### Disadvantages of Open Questions

- Different people give different degrees of detail when answering
- Answers may be unconnected or lost in insignificant detail
- Answers may be difficult to compare or statistical analyze
- People who are articulate and highly literate have an advantage
- Questions may be too general for some respondents who then lose direction
- A greater amount of response time, thought, and effort is necessary
- Some people can be intimidated by these questions
- The answers take up a lot of time

<b><u>Closed Questions</u></b>	<b><u>Open Questions</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited response and point of view</li><li>• Requires prior knowledge</li><li>• Answer is either right or wrong</li><li>• Quick require little time to answer</li><li>• Can be irritating and threatening</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cannot be answered with yes or no</li><li>• Usually requires a sentence to answer</li><li>• Allows the respondent to express point of view</li><li>• Can be time consuming.</li><li>• Builds trust and allows unrestrained response</li><li>• May lead to unnecessary comments</li></ul>

## Clarifying Questions

- **Examples**
  - Did I understand you when you said....?
  - Did I paraphrase what you said correctly?
  - What's another way you might....?
  - Did I hear you correctly when you said.....?

## Probing Questions

- Ask the speaker for additional information.
- Not all questions will be effective, and that's ok.
- Effective probing is nonthreatening and flows with what has previously been said.
- Avoids challenging questions that will put the speaker on the defensive.
- **Examples**
  - What do you think would happen if....?
  - How did you
    - decide?
    - conclude?
    - determine?
  - What sort of impact do think.....?
  - What are you most concerned about?
  - How does it make you feel?