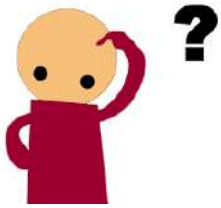
Under Fire



EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Asking and answering questions in English. Learn strategies and practice asking and answering questions. Review question forms.

Activity One - Ask and answer with your partner or teacher.



1. Do you ever teach, present or negotiate in English?
2. Are you a person who generally asks a lot of questions?
3. In which situations can asking questions be a good tactic in your experience?
4. Do you have any experience with conflict management?

Activity Two - Read the advice.

How to answer questions in English, even if you were not expecting them.

Do you speak in public, teach or lecture in English, facilitate meetings with English speaking colleagues or have to present a product or service in English? If you have to use English in any of these situations then it is probable that you will have to answer questions.

In a public speaking situation questions time can be challenging for the following reasons:
You have to give your answer to the audience without having any time to prepare.
You may not always understand the question, sometimes questions can be asked by non native speakers with unfamiliar pronunciation and intonation. Sometimes questions can be phrased in a long-winded or complicated way.
You may be in a situation where your audience wants to test or de-stabilise you, or where they have a lot of objections which you need to counter.



For all of these reasons you need a strategy for dealing with question time.

Here's some advice and expressions to help you to succeed even when you are under fire!

1/ Listen for the important words.

Remember that native speakers will emphasize the important words and often swallow the less important words. So listen actively for the main message. If a non-native speaker is questioning you, again, don't worry about every word, just trust yourself and the context, and listen for the main meaning. If you don't understand, you can always ask them to repeat.

2/ Ask them to repeat or re-phrase.
If you are not completely sure you understand a question, the chances are that other people in the audience didn't understand either. It's possible that the question was simply not very clear. It's a good idea to have a good selection of expressions available so that you can ask in a different way if you need to ask more than one person to repeat their question. Here are some examples:
"I'm not sure I understand exactly what you mean, can I ask you to repeat your question"
"sorry I didn't quite catch that, would you mind saying it again"
"Could I ask you to re-phrase that, I didn't quite understand your question."

3/ Answer a question with a question.
One tactic, if under fire, is to take back control. This strategy is best suited to a situation where someone is being very direct and putting you on the spot. Simply turn the question back on the person, to seek clarification, and buy yourself some time:
"I'm not sure what you mean by '....', could you explain?"
" When you say..... do you mean....."
"That's a very interesting question, can I just clarify....."

4/ Make a joke to lighten the atmosphere.
Sometimes it's just best to admit defeat! Honesty is often the best policy. Here are some expressions you could use:
"Wow, that's a complex question! I'm afraid you've lost me there! Could you maybe simplify it a bit for us".
"Phew, that was fast, could I ask you to say that again a little more slowly!"
"Ah, I think I might be in need of a coffee, I really didn't catch that, do you mind saying it again?"

5/ Practice and anticipate and answer in a structured way.
If you practice questions and answers, trying to predict what questions you might get, then you can prepare for question time as well as for the presentation or speech itself. Ask a friend or colleague to help you, or a teacher if you have one.
Get into the habit of structuring your answers. Use linking words
Choose a structure to make it easier for people to understand yo
example
Introduction: Well that is an interesting question because...
Outline: I'll answer you by explaining...
Content: First of all... secondly....
Conclusion: In conclusion, we can say that....



We hope this helps, here's a video on the same subject. https://youtu.be/9Pxk9hKKySQ

Activity Three: Role Plays. Act out the following situations with your partner or teacher. You will have to invent the subject of each presentation for each role play. You can choose which you want to do or even do several. Feel free to think of some ideas at home!

1. You are giving a presentation and when it gets to the end your audience is invited to ask questions. One persons asks you a very complicated and challenging question.

2. You are presenting a product or service to a potential client. At the end of the presentation your client asks you a series of quick questions, all rolled into one. You know that if you answer well you will get the sale!

3. You are outlining some new rules to some students/to some employees. One or several of them disagrees and asks you to explain the point of everything you have just said. Each time you explain, they challenge you again by asking another question.

Activity Four Listen to the song 'Human Nature' by Michael Jackson.

This song asks and answers some questions.
Now with a partner imagine that you are a journalist interviewing Michael Jackson during his lifetime, your aim being to find out what this song is about..

Activity Five - Conflict Management - ASKING QUESTIONS!

It's well known that if you are in a conflictual situation, the best strategy is to ask a series of questions and listen actively, rather than aggressively giving your opinion. Even if you have a strong reaction to an issue, or feel a strong sense of injustice, the best strategy is always to ask open questions. Often this takes the anger out of the situation. Be careful not to judge. Be careful not the fuel the anger of the person you are in conflict with or who is involved in the conflict. Instead ask a series of questions which will lead the person to think over their opinion. Sometimes just answering questions is enough. If you try to ask at least five open questions one after the other, there is a chance the the situation will resolve itself.

Let's review question forms in English and then read some advice by way of an example.

Question Forms Review
Questions are made in 3 different ways in English grammar depending on the verb tense:



1: We **change the position** (or 'invert') the verb and the subject.
This is used for the present simple and the past simple of 'be' and for modal verbs
2: We **add an extra word,** like 'do / does' or 'did'.
This is used for the past simple and the present simple of all other English verbs (not 'be').
3: We **change the position of the first auxiliary verb** and the subject.
This is for all other tenses, for example the present perfect, the present continuous or the future perfect continuous.

Give an example of each type of question.



Read and Summarize the text.
Source : http://www.dummies.com/business/human-resources/employee-relations/asking-questions-to-help-resolve-a-workplace-conflict/

When you're dealing with a conflict between yourself and a co-worker (your boss, a peer, or a subordinate), your focus is on resolving the conflict and improving the situation. Invite the other person to sit down with you, and ask these questions:

What would you like to see happen? What does that look like for you? Ask these questions one right after another so your colleague can describe what he does want versus what he doesn't want. He may ask for respect, but until he describes what respectful behavior

looks like to him, you won't know how to deliver on his request. Changing your behavior to match your definition of respect may not be what he's looking for.

What would it take for us to be able to move forward? How do we get there? These questions help an employee describe specific steps that may include an apology or a better understanding of his perspective before he can get over it.

Are you willing to share the impact this has had on you? Are you willing to hear my perspective? Asking about a conflict's impact moves the discussion from surface details to a working relationship level. Your colleague will appreciate your interest in him and may be more open to hearing your perspective as well. The goal is for both of you to understand the effects of actions, assumptions, and language choices.



What ideas do you have that would meet both our needs? The key part of this question is "both our needs." It puts the onus for solution on both of you and shows that you're interested in creating a remedy that isn't just about you.

Can you tell me more about that? This question helps you avoid the "why" questions, which can lead to defensiveness. Show a curiosity to hear more so an employee can share his perspective without feeling like he's on trial or your boss doesn't misinterpret a "why" question as disrespect.

What about this situation is most troubling to you? What's most important to you? Either way you ask it, this question helps you pinpoint what the real issues are (and they're almost always based on a core value being dismissed, disregarded, or trampled on).

Activity Six : **Practice conflict management.**

With your partner/group invent a situation where you have to resolve a conflict using questioning. Act out the situation with questions and answers.

