

Suggestions for Question and Answer Periods¹

- I. **Message questions** (The questioner really wants to make a statement, rather than inquire about something.)
 - A. Verbal indicators: “Don’t you think . . .” “I think . . .”
 - B. Nonverbal indicators: voice tone does not go up at the end of the comment, eye contact is with the audience rather than the speaker
 - C. Coping strategies:
 - 1. Allow brief statement, paraphrase statement, agree with all or part if possible
 - 2. Tactfully ask what is the question
- II. **Getcha questions** (The questioner really wants to put the speaker on the spot, rather than inquire about something.)
 - A. Verbal indicators: “Do you really mean . . .” “You can’t be serious . . .” “Why did you avoid . . .”
 - B. Nonverbal indicators:
 - 1. Sarcastic tone of voice
 - 2. Tense facial expression
 - 3. Eye contact moves to the audience after beginning
 - C. Coping strategies:
 - 1. Paraphrase the question with unbiased language
 - 2. Communicate openness by calm tone of voice and direct eye contact
 - 3. Acknowledge any part of the criticism that is accurate
 - 4. Summarize your point
- III. **Answer-seeking question**
 - A. Verb indicators: “How would you . . .” “What is the next . . .” “What would happen if . . .”
 - B. Nonverbal indicators:
 - 1. Voice tone goes up at end of the question
 - 2. Eye contact is with you
 - C. Coping strategies:
 - 1. Repeat question if whole audience did not hear
 - 2. Paraphrase question if you are not sure of its meaning
 - 3. State important portion of answer first
 - 4. Use impromptu speech procedures: state thesis of response, provide 1-2 points of support

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¹ This material is excerpted from Linda and Richard Heun, *Public Speaking: A New Speech Book*, 1979, p. 280. There are many internet guides to handling Q&A. For example, a “10-minute read” is available at <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/guide-for-handling-questions-after-a-presentation>.