



Developing your skills



Responding to Questions

Answering student's questions requires careful consideration, to ensure that you can explain what they need in a simple and straightforward way. You should listen to the question carefully and take a moment to think carefully before you respond. You may wish to answer with another question until you discover more about the student's situation or it could be that the question requires a very lengthy response. These notes give you some ideas of how to react to student's questions.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

Questioning can be a method of control in a conversation, and when you're asked questions, you may be tempted to respond without thinking of the opportunity that gives you to steer the conversation in the direction you want. Here are a few ways:

Pause for thought

Rather than try to answer the question straight away, pause for a moment. Don't be hurried. Hurrying is a technique used to try and stop you thinking. Pausing for thought can help your credibility too. It seems as if you are taking the student seriously as you carefully consider their question.

Answer with a question

Answering a question with a question is a great way of avoiding answering, at least for the moment. It gives you time to think.

Done well, it will result in them trying to answer your question and maybe forgetting the question they were asking in the first place.

- Ask for more detail: Dig further into the topic. Ask them to explain more.
- Question the question: Challenge the question being asked. Suggest there are other questions first.
- Ask a completely different question: You can also ask a completely different question. This will usually throw the other person off their tracks, particularly if you persist with further questions on the same track.

Ignore the question

A method used by many politicians is simply to ignore the question and say what you have to say anyway. A typical sharp steer is *'That's a very good question, but what I really want to say is...'*. Ignoring people and their questions is a breach of social rules, but sometimes it may be the only way to get your message across.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- [Learn Direct](#)
- [Changing minds](#)
- [Mind Tools](#)
- [Scottish Gov - Effective Questioning Techniques](#)