

Question time: be prepared

Someone might ask a question that you have never considered before. It might change the way you think about your topic.

In preparing for question time, anticipate which parts of your talk may need expanding, or may prove controversial or original. These are the areas where the audience is likely to focus on in question time. Some guidelines for dealing with questions:

1. **Listen carefully** to the question – make sure you’re answering the question that was asked. **Don’t panic.**
2. **Clarify** if you need to – “*So, are you asking about ... ?*”
3. **Comment** on the question before answering it - this gives you time to think.
4. **Be polite** – no question is stupid. What seems irrelevant now may change the way you think about your topic later.
5. **Be honest** – if you don’t know, you can say so.
6. **Take your time** – it is fine to take some time to think about the answer.

Responding to good questions (the questions that help get your message across)

I’m glad you asked that ...

That’s a very good question ...

That’s a question I have considered myself ...

Responding to difficult questions (the questions you can’t or prefer not to answer)

At this stage, it’s too early for me to comment on that ...

I don’t know off the top of my head. Can I get back to you on that? ...

That’s a really good question, but at this stage I don’t know the answer.

That’s an interesting question, but it’s outside the scope of what I’m presenting today...

I think that raises a different issue...

To be honest, at this stage I don’t have the information to comment on that...