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# Question-and-Answer Session

Level 4 Project



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# Question-and-Answer Session

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## About Question-and-Answer Session

Many presentations are followed by a question-and-answer session. A question-and-answer session allows audience members to add to their knowledge of your topic.

In this project, you will learn to prepare to answer questions and provide information clearly, concisely, and with confidence. You will also learn to deal with difficult audience members.

## Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

**Project Checklist**

**Evaluation Resource**

# Introduction and Assignment

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## Introduction

A question-and-answer session is an opportunity for you, as a speaker, to share additional information. A question-and-answer session can also provide you with valuable feedback on your presentation.

## Your Assignment

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to learn about and practice facilitating a question-and-answer session.

**Overview:** Select a topic of which you are particularly knowledgeable. Prepare and deliver a speech on this topic, followed by a question-and-answer session. Together, the speech and question-and-answer session must be 15 to 20 minutes. Use your time effectively to ensure both segments are completed.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



**Video:** Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



**Interactive Activity:** Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



**Resource:** Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



**Weblink:** Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

**For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.**

# Learning in Question-and-Answer Session

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## Assess and Reflect

To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

## Know

**For example:** I know how to manage time when leading a question-and-answer session.

## Wonder

**For example:** I wonder how to recognize the behaviors of each type of difficult audience member.

## Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Answer questions and provide information clearly, concisely, and with confidence.
- Build impromptu speaking skills.
- Effectively balance time during a presentation that includes a speech and question-and-answer session.
- Develop strategies for responding to challenging questions.
- Recognize the different types of difficult audience members.

## Benefits of a Question-and-Answer Session

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### Clarity and Value

A question-and-answer session is first and foremost an opportunity for your audience to clarify both the general and detailed aspects of your presentation. It also contributes to the value of your speech.

### Feedback

Allowing for questions at the end of a speech can provide you with valuable feedback from audience members about your presentation. You can gain an understanding of how to improve or hone the information you present.

For example, when audiences ask questions about a particular aspect of your speech, it may indicate that you need to clarify or add more information to that section for future presentations.

### New Information

Audiences may seek additional information or access to your expertise and knowledge on the topic. You may learn something new because of feedback from audience members and their unique points of view.

### Credibility and Rapport

Providing thoughtful answers increases your credibility and builds rapport with audiences.

# Preparing a Question-and-Answer Session

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The topic you choose for your presentation needs to be conducive to a question-and-answer session. You may be asked a wide variety of questions on the subject, so select a topic you know well.

Research-based and demonstration speeches lend themselves well to questions.

## Anticipate Possible Questions

Prepare yourself by anticipating audience questions. As you conduct research for your speech, develop a list of possible questions you think the audience might ask.

When you've finished writing your speech and have drafted a list of possible questions, research and write down the answers. Make notes as needed so you can quickly check facts or remember the point you want to make. Give your answer without reading from your notes to ensure a natural quality.

## Rehearse

Preparation is your best strategy for dealing with questions. If you can, practice with an audience of friends or colleagues. Present your speech and allow time for questions. Your practice audience may be able to bring questions to your attention that you didn't anticipate.

## Manage Time

Practicing will give you a clear view of how much time you need for both the speech and the question-and-answer session. In the assignment for this project, the organization of your time is up to you. In other settings the time for the speech and question-and-answer session may be determined by the group organizing the presentation. Always check time constraints and requirements in advance.

# Your Question-and-Answer Session

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## Before the Presentation

Before your presentation, ensure your audience knows that a question-and-answer session will follow your speech. Setting the expectation can encourage audience members to formulate questions as they listen to your presentation. It may also prevent interruptions during your speech if the audience knows that time has been set aside for questions.

## After the Presentation

At the conclusion of your speech, summarize what you covered. A quick review refreshes audience members' memories and may remind them of questions. Ask them to limit questions to the topic of your presentation.

If you choose, you can encourage audience members with questions beyond the scope of your speech to stay after the question-and-answer session and speak to you individually. You may want to provide the audience with an email address where they can contact you with any additional questions.

## Prompt Questions

If audience members are hesitant to ask questions, start the session by raising one or more questions that you anticipated while preparing your presentation. You can prompt the audience by saying, "Here's a question you may be wondering about..." or "I'm often asked about..."

## Restate Questions

After an audience member asks you a question, take the time to restate it. Doing this confirms that you understood the question and gives you a few seconds to decide how to respond. Restating the question also ensures that all audience members hear it.

## Manage Questions

Answer each question to the best of your ability. Confirm with the person asking the question whether you provided the information they needed. Once you have confirmation, keep the session moving by asking for the next question. If the person asking the question is not satisfied with your answer, make it clear you will be glad to discuss their question individually after the session is over. Then move on to the next question.

## Manage Time

Keep track of time yourself or ask another member to signal you at a predetermined time. Indicate to the audience when you have time for one final question.

Preparation does not eliminate the impromptu nature of answering questions. There are elements of a question-and-answer session that you cannot predict. The following guidelines are designed to help you overcome the challenges of facing the unknown.

**Listen:** A good response is dependent on understanding the question.

**Wait:** Be sure the questioner has finished asking their question before you respond. Interrupting before the full question is stated is impolite and may cause you to respond with the wrong information.

**Pause:** Pausing can add drama, allow audience members to absorb your message, or give them the opportunity to respond to humor. A pause is always preferable to verbal filler words.

**Inform:** Stay focused and answer the question while keeping your response concise.

**Close:** End your comments and move on.

# Responding to Challenging Questions

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## Ask for Clarification

If a question is unfocused or unclear, you may need to acquire additional information. Taking the time to understand the question will allow you to answer it well. Ask the participant open-ended questions to obtain the missing information. An open-ended question is one that cannot be answered with a single word (such as yes or no).

An example of an open-ended question is: “Can you tell me what you mean by...” and then restate the part of the initial question you need to clarify. Asking one or more clarifying questions is better than providing an incorrect or incomplete answer.

## When You Do Not Have an Answer

Be honest and acknowledge when you don't have an answer. Invite the questioner to remain at the close of the meeting. At that time, you can either locate the information they need or invite them to contact you via email or other form of communication so that you can respond with the answer.

### During the question-and-answer session:

- Make note of any question(s) you are unable to answer.
- If you need to follow up and you are not providing your contact information to the audience, invite the participant to leave their contact information with you.
- Inform the participant when you expect to be able to provide an answer and honor the timeline you set.

# Difficult Audience Members

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Certain types of audience members may be disruptive to a question-and-answer session. The two types that pose the greatest challenge are the Talker and the Arguer.

Managing a Difficult Audience is an elective project available to all members. Take a few minutes to review the material about how to manage types of difficult audience members.

### **The Talker**

The Talker comments too often and for too long, dominating the discussion.

### **The Interrupter**

The Interrupter may believe they have something to contribute—this participant wants to agree, disagree, or make another point. Some Interrupters are impatient for information and ask questions about topics that will be discussed later. Others simply want attention.

### **The Chatterer**

The Chatterer engages in individual conversations with other participants. They might comment on something being discussed or talk about an unrelated subject.

### **The Arguer**

The Arguer might be a know-it-all, someone with incorrect information, or someone who enjoys correcting others. They may also have difficulty stating suggestions in a constructive manner.

### **The Silent Type**

The Silent Type finds it difficult to speak in a group setting. They may shut down when questions are posed due to shyness, insecurity, indifference, or uncertainty.

## **Closing the Question-and-Answer Session**

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After answering the final question, end with a brief summary of your presentation by restating the main points.

If appropriate, stay after the presentation to answer any additional questions. You may also provide your contact information to allow your audience to follow up with you. This is a great way to build your professional network.

Take the time to evaluate the question-and-answer session as you would any speech. Make note of your successes and consider any areas you can improve for next time.



Watch a video on Base Camp to learn more.

# Review and Apply

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Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- What strategies have you learned to manage a question-and-answer session?
- How will you use the information in this project to help in managing time when presenting or answering questions?
- What are the types of difficult audience members?
- List some strategies for addressing challenging questions.

# Complete Your Assignment

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## Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

### This project includes:

- A speech and question-and-answer session lasting 15 to 20 minutes

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Select a topic for an informational speech that supports a question-and-answer session.

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education. Be sure to inform them that your speech and question-and-answer session will take 15 to 20 minutes.

Write your speech. Remember, this speech is the first part of your question-and-answer session. You may speak for as long as you like during the 20-minute project time, but you will be evaluated on your use of time.

Rehearse your speech.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

# Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

## Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

## Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

## Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

## Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

## Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

## Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

## Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

### Response

- 5 – Responses are an exemplary example of managing all types of questions, regardless of challenge
- 4 – Responses to every question are thoughtful and comprehensive
- 3 – Responds effectively to all questions
- 2 – Responds effectively to some questions but not all
- 1 – Has difficulty responding to questions

### Facilitation

- 5 – Question-and-answer session is exemplary
- 4 – Question-and-answer session is exceptionally well-run and managed
- 3 – Question-and-answer session is managed well
- 2 – Question-and-answer session shows some organization, but needs improvement
- 1 – Question-and-answer session is disorganized or ineffective

### Time Management

- 5 – Manages time with few or no flaws in organization of question-and-answer session
- 4 – Demonstrates excellent time management strategy
- 3 – Manages time effectively
- 2 – Shows some time management skill, but needs improvement
- 1 – Manages time ineffectively or leaves no time for question-and-answer session

## Complete Your Project

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Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

### Learned

**For example:** I learned the importance of impromptu speaking when leading a question-and-answer session.

# Before You Move On

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## **Review Your Learning**

Review all the material in this project.

## **Deliver Your Speech**

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

## **Receive Your Evaluation**

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

## **Assess and Reflect**

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

## **Congratulations!**

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Question-and-Answer Session project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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