

Master the Q&A with these 5 Steps:

Listen. Really listen.

Pay attention to the question, the entire question, without formulating your answer. If you don't, you may answer the "wrong" question. Listening well demonstrates respect to the seeker and the audience. Observe the seeker and look for nonverbal cues to hidden questions or emotions.

Listen. Really listen.

Pause and repeat.

Take a moment to organize your thoughts and prepare an answer. There is power in silence. A brief pause demonstrates the seeker's question is worthy of thought. Repeating the question is helpful if others couldn't hear it and allows you to clarify if you understood it correctly.

Pausing gives you time to formulate a good response.

Provide a succinct summary.

Begin your response with a one or two sentence summary of the answer. Determine if the question seeks greater clarity or context. Put the answer in perspective of the bigger picture before providing specific examples to illustrate and build your case. If possible, tie your response back to a key point.

Elaborate with evidence.

Provide a brief answer and add one supporting piece of evidence – a statistic, an example, a reason, a fact, even an opinion or quotation (if clearly indicated as such). Build in a clue that although you are giving just one main piece of support, you could provide more details if the seeker, or others, wish to know more. Let someone ask for more if desired.

Emphasize a key point.

An answer can be made stronger by restating your initial one-sentence summary or by emphasizing a related key point. Don't weaken your response with endings such as, "I don't know if that answered your question." Just end. Smile and turn to the audience demonstrating you are open to more questions.