



QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

LEVEL 4 PROJECT



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INTRODUCTION



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. It's 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.

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.

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.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist on page 13.



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.

ASSESS YOUR SKILLS

Evaluate your current skill level by rating each statement.



Select the appropriate number based on your skills today:

5
EXEMPLARY

4
EXCEL

3
ACCOMPLISHED

2
EMERGING

1
DEVELOPING

| Pre-Project | Statement | Post-Project |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| 5 4 3 2 1 | I am comfortable managing time when leading a question-and-answer session. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | I am comfortable with impromptu speaking. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | I am able to recognize the different types of difficult audience members. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | I am able to manage difficult questions in front of an audience calmly and without losing control of the discussion. | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | I recognize how this project applies to my life outside of Toastmasters. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

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

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



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

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 he 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 his 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 her 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

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 she needs or invite her 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 her 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

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 she has 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. He 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. She 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. He may shut down when questions are posed due to shyness, insecurity, indifference, or uncertainty.

The Electronic Device Enthusiast

In some circumstances, audience members may be invited to post on social media, respond to questions using their devices, or access electronic content. In other instances, the use of any electronic device is inappropriate.

State your expectations at the beginning of your presentation. It is appropriate to discourage any audience member behavior that interferes with another's experience.

CLOSING THE QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

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.



REVIEW AND APPLY

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



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

Review: Return to page 3 to review your assignment.



Organize: Use the Project Checklist on page 13 to review the steps and add your own. This will help you organize and prepare your assignment.

Schedule: Work with the vice president education to schedule your speech.



Prepare: Prepare for your evaluation. Review the evaluation resources on pages 14–16 and share all resources with your evaluator before your speech. You may choose to share your evaluation resources online.

PROJECT CHECKLIST

Question-and-Answer Session

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.

Below are tasks you will need to complete for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You may alter the following list to incorporate any other tasks necessary for your project.

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 him or her 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.

After you have completed all components of the assignment, including your speech, return to page 4 to rate your skills in the post-project section.

EVALUATION FORM

Question-and-Answer Session

Member Name _____ Date _____

Evaluator _____ **Speech Length:** 15 – 20 minutes

Speech Title _____

Purpose Statements

- The purpose of this project is for the member to learn about and practice facilitating a question-and-answer session.
- The purpose of this speech is for the member to practice delivering an informative speech and running a well-organized question-and-answer session. The member is responsible for managing time so there is adequate opportunity for both.

Notes for the Evaluator

Evaluate the member's speech and his or her facilitation of a question-and-answer session.

Listen for: A well-organized informational speech about any topic, followed by a well-facilitated question-and-answer session.

General Comments

You excelled at:

You may want to work on:

To challenge yourself:

For the evaluator: In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this form.

| 5 EXEMPLARY | 4 EXCELS | 3 ACCOMPLISHED | 2 EMERGING | 1 DEVELOPING | |
|--|-------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|
| Clarity: Spoken language is clear and is easily understood | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Vocal Variety: Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Eye Contact: Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Gestures: Uses physical gestures effectively | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Audience Awareness: Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Comfort Level: Appears comfortable with the audience | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Interest: Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Response: Responds effectively to all questions | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Facilitation: Question-and-answer session is managed well | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Time Management: Manages time effectively | | | | | Comment: |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Question-and-Answer Session

This criteria lists the specific goals and expectations for the speech. Please review each level to help you complete the evaluation.

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



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