

HANDLING QUESTIONS

The after-presentation discussion is a social situation where the presenter's role is to encourage the audience to express their opinions and ask questions. Each answer should serve as an invitation for other questions and comments. A polite audience always reacts in some way to what has been said in the presentation.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Structure:

- Invite questions*
- Listen carefully right to the end*
- Welcome the question*
- Repeat, paraphrase, or clarify*
- Take time to think before answering*
- Answer the question relevantly*
- Check whether the questioner is satisfied*

- Anticipate questions, think of what your audience might want to know (for example, you can use details you planned to include but left out under the time limit)
- even if you know the answer, think – take time to construct a concise, to-the-point answer
- if you do not know the answer, say so, then try to find it
 - you might offer to look it up (*"I do not have the numbers with me, but if you leave me your e-mail address, I can look them up and send you the answer later."*)
 - you might refer the questioner to someone who might have an answer (*"Oh, that is a strongly biological question. I am a chemist myself, so my work focuses on the chemical processes involved. Is there a biologist in the room who can answer this question?"*)
 - you might even guess, **as long as you make it clear that your answer is a guess** (*"I have never calculated it in the case you mention, but if I had to give you an answer right now, I would guess... "*)

TASK 1

Štěpánek, L. de Haff, J. Academic English, Grada, 2011, p.134

Read the questions and answers below and decide what functions the questions have:

a) Sorry, you said the research took how long to complete?

Eleven, yes, it was eleven months.

b) Sorry, I didn't get what you meant by reciprocal. Could you explain that, please?

No problem, it means that something is done or given by someone because another person did or gave something similar to them. In our context, it was a reciprocal agreement, meaning mutual- among two parties.

c) Sorry, it probably is not related to your topic, it is more about synthetic intelligence. Could you tell me whether all machines are inspired by biological systems?

Well, sorry, the synthetic intelligence and biological systems are a slightly different area which would raise a completely different range of issues. Maybe we could discuss it some other time. Is that ok?

d) Can I just say that I thought your analysis was simply excellent.

Well, thank you very much. It is certainly an interesting area that is worth exploring.

e) I agree with you to a certain extent, but don't you think that the numbers are a bit exaggerated?

Well, I believe my information is correct, and our results support it but I can certainly recheck it. Have you got any other figures from different sources that we would compare?

Ask for repetition	Ask an irrelevant question	Ask for simplification
Ask for clarification	Ask for additional information	Give your opinion
Agree	Ask for sources	Ask for evidence
Ask for examples	Interrupt the speaker	Ask for opinion
Follow up a question. You are not satisfied with the answer.	Express doubt and reservation	Disagree
Ask for methods	Ask for details	Express compliment

TASK 2 Examples of questions: Which of them are

direct questions

clarifying a question

checking the questioner is satisfied

avoiding giving an answer ?

polite / indirect questions

What is the cause of ...?
Where do you plan to ...?

Do you mind // if I ask you // if/whether...
Would you mind // telling me // what where etc...
...about
Could/Can you tell me //
I'm interested to know... //
I'd like to know ... //

If I understand you correctly, you are saying/asking...
I didn't quite catch that.
Could you go over that again?
I'm not sure what you're getting at.

Does that answer your question?
Is that clear?
May we go on?

Perhaps we could deal with that later.
Can we talk about that on another occasion?
I'm afraid that's not my field.
I don't have the figures with me.

TASK 3 Conclusion and questions

A) Here are sentences from a conclusion of a presentation. Match the correct halves.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| A Before we come to the end, | 1 there are four major features. |
| B I'd be glad to answer | 2 we start the discussion now. |
| C To summarize, | 3 by quoting a well-known saying. |
| D We can conclude | 4 we should reduce our costs. |
| E In my opinion, | 5 any questions now. |
| F I'd like to suggest | 6 I'd like to thank you for your participation. |

B) Use the information below to prepare and give the ending of a presentation on your home town.

Signal to the end – summary - conclusion – close – invitation for questions <i>the place</i> <i>future</i> <i>thanks</i> <i>the people</i> <i>the politics</i>

- Tell your partners what you are going to talk about and let them see your notes. Then write as many questions based on the talk as possible. You should be able to answer them or at least to react in a way.
- In small groups your study partners should prepare different types of question to ask you – irrelevant, difficult (asking for precise facts), interesting, controversial. Give your talk. The others will interrupt you to ask their questions (even those you have already answered). Deal with each type of question as politely as you can.

HANDLING STAGE FRIGHT

stage fright is normal, most speakers are nervous

Before the presentation:

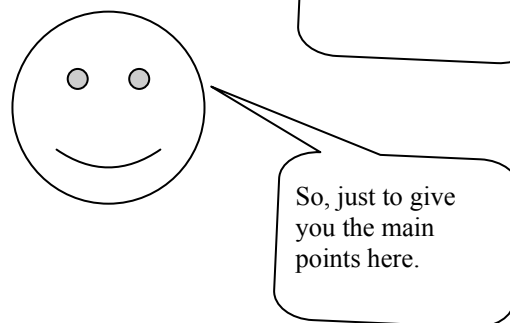
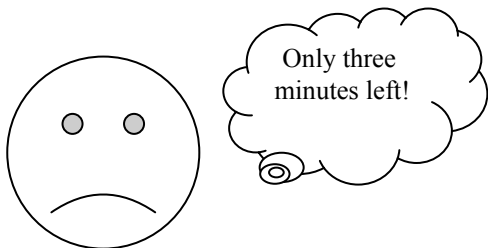
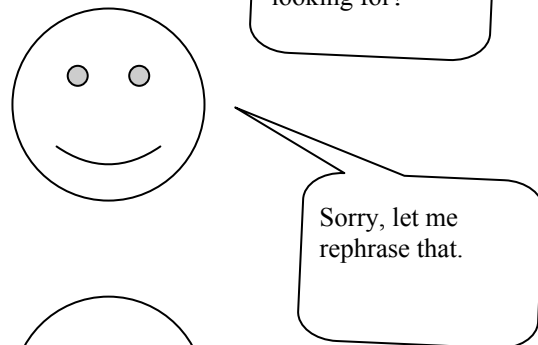
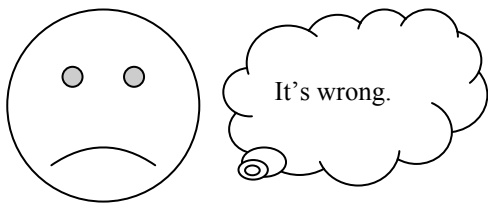
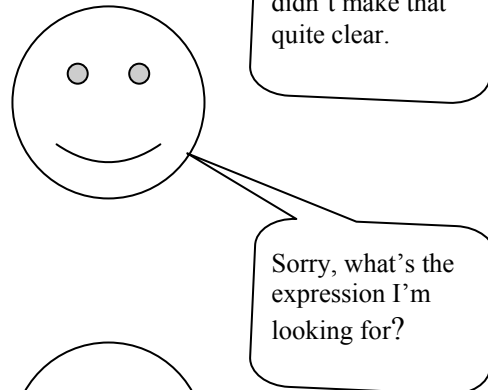
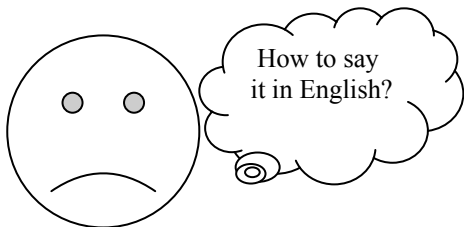
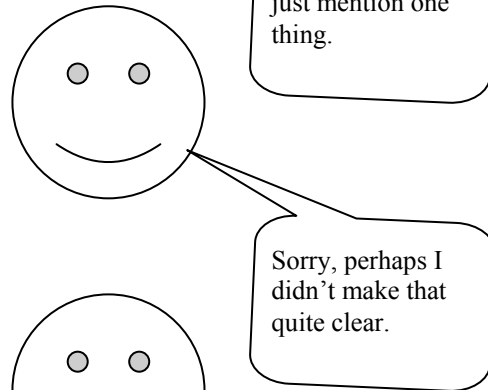
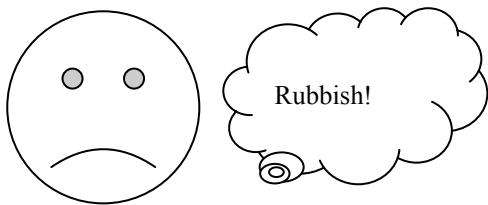
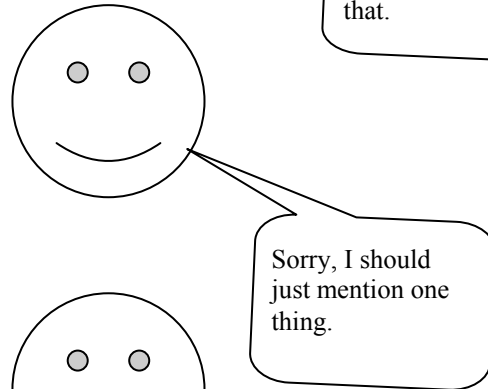
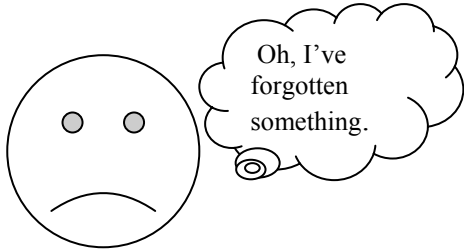
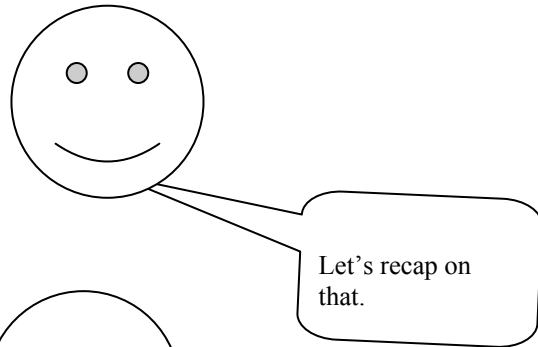
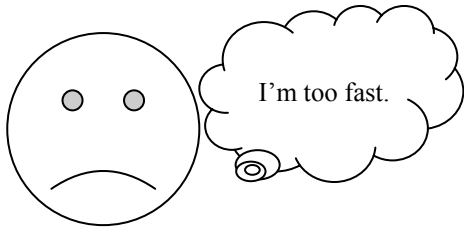
- identify key terms (they are difficult to paraphrase)
- you can prepare a list of difficult words to learn and practice
- write down crucial sentences, this should be a help but do not feel bound to what you write down
- check how to pronounce some words and phrases (<http://www.howjsay.com/>)
- you may want to include some terms on slides, so that the audience makes the connection between the term and what you say

During

- have a positive attitude about the presentation at all times
- do what it takes to get your message across, even if it means doing something differently than you had planned
- speak more slowly, especially at the beginning
- do not apologize if mishaps occur, focus on delivering results, not excuses

1. What do you do when you have difficulties?
2. What could help you avoid panic?
3. Compare what you think and what you say.

SURVIVAL TACTICS



Indirect questions

<http://esl.about.com/od/grammar1/a/indirectques.htm>

Direct questions are often considered rude when speaking to strangers. To be more polite we often use **indirect** question forms. Indirect questions serve the same purpose as direct questions, but are considered more formal. When using an indirect question, use an introductory phrase followed by the question itself in **positive sentence structure**. Connect the two phrases with the question word or 'if' in the case the question is a 'yes', 'no' question.

Introductory phrase + question word (or if) + positive sentence

Examples:

Where is Jack? > I was wondering if you know where Jack is?

When does Alice usually arrive? > Do you know when Alice usually arrives?

Here are some of the most common phrases used for asking indirect questions. Many of these phrases are questions (i.e., *Do you know when the next train leaves?*), while others are statements made to indicate a question (i.e., *I wonder if he will be on time.*).

Do you know ... ?

I wonder / was wondering

Can you tell me ... ?

Do you happen to know ...?

I have no idea ...

I'm not sure ...

I'd like to know ...

Have you any idea ...

Form indirect questions:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| C) Whose bag is this? | N) What do you mean? |
| D) How many guests are there? | O) Who is the song about? |
| E) What does he mean? | P) Can you come and help me? |
| F) When are they posting it? | Q) What shall we start with? |
| G) Where has Peter gone? | R) Where would they like to sit? |
| H) Why is this on special offer? | S) How old is he? |
| I) Is there a hotel there? | T) Whose dog is that? |
| J) Does he speak French? | U) When does the next train to Prague
leave? |
| K) Is there a hotel there? | |
| L) How much time have we got left? | V) Why are you so late? |
| M) Why did she do that? | W) How much does it cost? |

Sources Libor Štěpánek, Academic Presentations
Hana Němcová English for Biologists
Eva Čoupková Indirect Questions

Recommended viodeos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbDipVRt5aE> about stage fright
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQMtttZJG_Y handling questions with confidence
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djb-0Q_g33o handling questions