

## **Questioning Skills**

There are 5 commonly used types of questions:

### ***Open questions***

Open questions are questions that require more than a one-word answer. For example, questions that start with *what*, *when*, *where*, *how* and *who* generally require more than a one-word answer. Open questions encourage the responder to think and put their thoughts into words. They are also encouraged to open up and give more information. Use these questions when you want to encourage conversation and when you seek more information.

Avoid using *why*, although it will commence an open question. Asking the responder *why* usually requires them to explain or justify themselves and has a negative impact on conversation.

Although a statement like "*Tell me more about that*" is not a question, it seeks more information and is often used on place of an open question.

### ***Closed questions***

These are questions with a one-word answer, usually yes or no. Questions like "*What is your name*" are also closed questions. Closed questions are useful to frame or move the conversation in a particular direction. Use these questions when you want to discourage conversation but when you seek specific information.

### ***Leading questions***

These are questions that imply that something is a fact in the design of the question. For example "*Where were you going when you fled the scene of the crime?*" Using the words "fled the scene of the crime" implies that leaving a location somehow suggested guilt. These types of questions are useful when you want to use assumptions and presuppositions to build an argument. They are dangerous if the respondent does not pick up on the implication and allows it to be taken as fact.

### ***Runway questions***

These are a series of easy-to-answer questions that precede a more reflective, perhaps emotionally charged question. Runway questions get the respondent talking and help them to be more relaxed. Simple factual questions and closed questions are useful runway questions. These types of questions are often the early questions in job interviews. For example "*How was your trip over here?*" and "*Where did you travel from?*" are runway questions that might precede a question like "*What are your strengths and weaknesses in relation to this job?*".

### ***Reflective questions***

These are *what... if* questions. They ask the respondent to answer a hypothetical question. For example "*What would your first actions be if you were to win this position?*" and "*What would you do if you won the lottery?*" are reflective questions

Listen to the answers. There is a great temptation to think more about the design of the previous and next questions than to listen to the answers. The best way to develop skill in questioning is to practice different types of questions. Prepare questions in advance, especially for sensitive conversations.