

**How to Ask an Open-Ended Question**

**Image of people having a dialogue.  Heading reads "Prefer open-ended questions"  then "Ask 'How was your day?'" instead of "GOod day?"

Image shows how responses may differ depending on the way the question is asked.**

There are two ways of asking questions: ***close-ended*** and ***open-ended***.

**Close-ended questions**

* Can be answered with either a single word or a short phrase such as “yes” or “no.*”*
* Are *easy* to answer and provide no details or analysis.
* Do not encourage in-depth or long-range thinking.

**Open-ended questions**

* Are likely to receive an in-depth, detailed answer.
* Ask the respondent to *think* and reflect on what he or she has read.
* Encourage critical thinking that leads the respondent to think beyond the reading assignment.
* Usually begin with “how,” “why,” or “what.”

**Examples:**

|  |  |
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| **Close-Ended** | **Open-Ended** |
| Do you get along well with your supervisor? | How do you view your relationship with your supervisor? |
| Who will you vote for in this election? | What do you think about the two candidates in this election? |
| Did you like that story we read for this week? | What did you think of the story we read for this week? |
| Did the protagonist act unwisely in the story? | Why did the protagonist make the choices she did? |
| Did you understand *Macbeth*? | What were the consequences of Macbeth’s actions? |

**General Open-Ended Question Template**

* What do you think about ?
* In what way does the story/poem ?
* How would you interpret the character’s \_\_\_\_\_\_?
* How did the ending ?
* What was the problem ?
* Why did the story/poem ?
* Why did the character react ?
* What did it mean when ?
* How does the symbolism ?
* What kind of conflict ?