

# Suggestions for Question and Answer Periods<sup>1</sup>

- I. **Message questions** (The questioner really wants to make a statement, rather than inquire about something.)
  - A. Verbal indicators: “Don’t you think . . .” “I think . . .”
  - B. Nonverbal indicators: voice tone does not go up at the end of the comment, eye contact is with the audience rather than the speaker
  - C. Coping strategies:
    1. Allow brief statement, paraphrase statement, agree with all or part if possible
    2. Tactfully ask what is the question
  
- II. **Getcha questions** (The questioner really wants to put the speaker on the spot, rather than inquire about something.)
  - A. Verbal indicators: “Do you really mean . . .” “You can’t be serious . . .” “Why did you avoid . . .”
  - B. Nonverbal indicators:
    1. Sarcastic tone of voice
    2. Tense facial expression
    3. Eye contact moves to the audience after beginning
  - C. Coping strategies:
    1. Paraphrase the question with unbiased language
    2. Communicate openness by calm tone of voice and direct eye contact
    3. Acknowledge any part of the criticism that is accurate
    4. Summarize your point
  
- III. **Answer-seeking question**
  - A. Verb indicators: “How would you . . .” “What is the next . . .” “What would happen if . . .”
  - B. Nonverbal indicators:
    1. Voice tone goes up at end of the question
    2. Eye contact is with you
  - C. Coping strategies:
    1. Repeat question if whole audience did not hear
    2. Paraphrase question if you are not sure of its meaning
    3. State important portion of answer first
    4. Use impromptu speech procedures: state thesis of response, provide 1-2 points of support

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<sup>1</sup> This material is excerpted from Linda and Richard Heun, *Public Speaking: A New Speech Book*, 1979, p. 280. There are many internet guides to handling Q&A. For example, a “10-minute read” is available at <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/guide-for-handling-questions-after-a-presentation>.