

Open verses Closed Questions

OPEN Question: Open questions “are those that can’t be answered in a few words. They encourage others to talk and provide you with maximum information.”¹ Open questions give the person talking more freedom to go in any direction he or she may choose. They have the freedom to direct where they want to go with it.

CLOSED Questions: Closed questions “can be answered in a few words or sentences.”² Closed questions direct the person talking to specific information that you want, but have the disadvantage of getting brief, one word answers, such as “yes” or “no.”

Note: The person asking all the questions is “in charge” of the conversation, but remember, it can feel “controlling” to the person being questioned.

Examples:

| Questions that begin with key words (such as <i>what, how, is, are, could, do, does</i>) | Open, or Closed? |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>What</i> “What are you doing this weekend?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 2. <i>How</i> “How did that happen?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 3. <i>Why</i> “Why is that important to you?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 4. <i>Is</i> “Is there a problem with your finances?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 5. <i>Are</i> “Are you sure you can do that?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 6. <i>Could</i> “Could you please explain that to me?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 7. <i>Do</i> “Do you get along with him?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 8. <i>Does</i> “Does someone else know your side of the story?” | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |

Write your own examples:

| | |
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| 9. | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 10. | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |
| 11. | <input type="checkbox"/> Open, <input type="checkbox"/> Closed |

^{1,2} “*Intentional Interviewing and Counseling*,” By A. E. Ivey, 3rd Ed., 1994, 1988, 1983.