

# 5 Tips for Mastering the Q&A

## Questions demonstrate audience interest

Speakers often shy away from the Q&A and hope their call for questions is met with silence.

Fear no more, because when audience members eagerly ask questions it shows they are interested in learning more. The Q&A session provides an excellent opportunity to eliminate confusion, elaborate on evidence, and emphasize key points. Embrace the Q&A, don't fear it!

## Plan for questions

Provide a time and process for asking questions. The Q&A is often at the conclusion of a speech, but questions can also be solicited throughout a presentation. Use one or more methods that encourage all audience members to participate such as raising hands, coming to a microphone, a phone app, or collecting index cards. Plan to follow with closing remarks.

## Listen first and well

The first step in effectively responding to questions is to listen. As Chapter 36 in *Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide* states, "Really listen. Pay attention to the question, the entire question, without formulating an answer." Listening demonstrates respect, promotes understanding, and accounts for verbal and nonverbal cues. Listen first. Listen well.

## Pause, repeat, upgrade if needed

Before answering, organize your thoughts, and if needed, repeat the question to be certain you heard it correctly and to benefit other audience members. If a question is confusing, overly complex, inappropriate, or unrelated, seek to improve the question. This is a proven method for dealing with difficult questions. Create a win-win-win for questioner, speaker, and audience.

## Answer, elaborate, summarize

A well-thought-out response includes a succinct answer using clear language, one piece of supporting evidence or an example, and a summary to tie the answer to a key point. Use the Q&A to clarify and emphasize the main ideas presented in a way that addresses the audience's needs.

With practice and preparation, the Q&A can be a high point of a presentation.