



CLOSED AND OPEN QUESTIONS

In a conversation, completing surveys, being interviewed for a job or working on a homework assignment, you might find yourself presented with a series of closed-ended or open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are those which can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no," while open-ended questions are those which require more thought and more than a simple one-word answer.

Closed-Ended Questions

If you can answer a question with only a "yes" or "no" response, then you are answering a closed-ended type of question.

Examples of closed-ended questions are:

Are you feeling better today?

May I use the bathroom?

Is that your final answer?

Shall we make dinner together tonight?

Can I help you with that?

Is he dead?

Closed-ended questions should not always be thought of as simple questions that anyone can quickly answer merely because they require a yes or no answer. Closed-ended questions can also be very complicated.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are ones that require more than one word answers. The answers could come in the form of a list, a few sentences or something longer such as a speech, paragraph or essay.

Here are some examples of open-ended questions:

What are you planning to buy today at the supermarket?

What is your favorite memory from childhood?

How did you and your best friend meet?

How do you go about purchasing a home?

What is it like to live in Morocco?

How could I present myself better?

How do you manage to raise those children alone?

Although open-ended questions require lengthier responses than closed-ended questions, open-ended questions are not always more complicated.

When These Questions Are Used

Either type of question can be used in a wide variety of scenarios. However, if you're looking for a guide to liken these types of questions to, you can think of closed-ended questions as multiple choice questions on a school exam and open-ended questions as short responses and essay questions on an exam.

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions require an answer with more depth and a lengthier response. Open-ended questions are also helpful in finding out more about a person or a situation, whether it's during an interview, at a party, or when getting to know a new friend.

Closed-ended Questions

Closed-ended questions can be answered in only one word or with a short, specific piece of information. Closed-ended questions can also be used in the situations mentioned above, although they have the potential to end the conversation.

Here are examples of closed-ended questions in these types of situations:

Have you ever met Joe before?

Where did you go to college?

What is your best quality?

Are you happy?

Do you have a pet?

Do you like animals?

Do you like rain?

Now, here's some examples of these closed-ended questions turned into open-ended questions – to keep the conversation going:

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream and why?

How did you meet Joe?

What do you feel was most beneficial about your college experience?

How can your top qualities help our company to thrive and grow?

What are some of the things that bring you the most joy?

Do you have a pet and what is your pet like?

Do you like animals and why?

From these examples, it is clear that closed-ended questions are used to elicit a short, quick response, while open-ended questions are gateways into a conversation.