

Examples of Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questions

In a conversation, when completing a research survey, 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. Close-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.

Close-Ended Questions

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

Examples of close-ended questions are:

- Are you feeling better today?
- May I use the bathroom?
- Is the prime rib a special tonight?
- Should I date him?
- Will you please do me a favor?
- Have you already completed your homework?
- Is that your final answer?
- Were you planning on becoming a fireman?
- Should I call her and sort things out?
- Is it wrong to want to live on my own at this age?
- Shall we make dinner together tonight?
- Could I possibly be a messier house guest?
- Might I be of service to you ladies this evening?
- Did that man walk by the house before?
- Can I help you with that?
- May I please have a bite of that pie?
- Would you like to go to the movies tonight?
- Is math your favorite subject?
- Does four plus four equal eight?
- Is that haunted house really scary?
- Will you be going to Grandmother's house for Christmas?
- Did Dad make the cake today?
- Is there a Mass being held at noon?
- Are you pregnant?
- Are you happy?
- Is he dead?

Close-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. Close-ended questions can also be very complicated. For example, "Is 1 in binary equal to 1 in counting numbers?" is a close-ended question that not everyone would be able to quickly answer.

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 were the most important wars fought in the history of the United States?
- What are you planning to buy today at the supermarket?
- How exactly did the fight between the two of you start?
- What is your favorite memory from childhood?
- How will you help the company if you are hired to work for us?
- What do you plan to do immediately following graduation from college?
- What types of decorations do you plan to have for your friend's birthday party?
- What was your high school experience like?
- How did you and your best friend meet?
- What sites do you expect to see on your vacation?
- How do you go about booking tickets for a flight?
- What were the major effects of World War II for the United States?
- How do you go about purchasing a home?
- What is it like to live in the capital of Morocco?
- What is the quickest way to get to the pet store in town?
- Why is it that every time I talk with you, you seem irritated?
- In what way do you feel I should present myself?
- How do you manage to raise those children alone?
- What is the matter with the people in that class?
- Where are you going to find the time to write all those letters?
- Why can't I come along with you?
- What makes the leaves change color?
- How exactly does one replace the screen to a cellular phone?

Although open-ended questions require lengthier responses than do close-ended questions, open-ended questions are not always more complicated. For example, asking "What are you planning to buy today at the supermarket?" may simply require the respondent to read off of a list.

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 close-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 a response 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.

Close-ended Questions

Close-ended questions can be answered in only one word or very short phrase. Close-ended questions can also be used in the situations mentioned above, although they have the potential to end the conversation.

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

- Would you like vanilla ice cream?
- Have you ever met Joe before?
- Where did you go to college?
- What is your best quality?
- Are you happy?
- Do you enjoy your car?
- Does your brother have the same interests as you?
- Do you have a pet?
- Do you like animals?
- When is your birthday?
- Do you like rain?

Now, here's some examples of these close-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?
- Why did you decide to purchase a Volvo?
- What interests do you and your brother share, and which interests do you not share?
- Do you have a pet and what is your pet like?
- Do you like animals and why?
- When is your birthday and how do you like to celebrate?
- Do you like rain and what do you usually do during rain storms?

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

