

Types of Questions & Approaches for Responding

Informational

Questions requesting clarity or more information about your topic.

- How does this relate to...?
- Can you say more about...?
- How would you prioritize ...?
- How are you going to do this?

Speculative

Questions asking you to speculate on the future or the thoughts/actions of others.

- What do you think will happen if...?
- What does the opposition think?
- How will competitors react if we do this?

Note: Speculative questions can be risky. Before answering, ask yourself: is this question in scope, or out of scope, of what I am legitimately expected to talk about? For instance:

In Scope:

- Analyst being asked to make a prediction based on an area of expertise
- Director being asked to speculate on the outcome of the department's new initiative

If the question is in scope, state your assumptions and be very clear about what you know and don't know.

Out of Scope:

- Being asked to speculate on what your competitor is thinking
- Being asked to speculate on a subject that's not the focus of the meeting and where you don't have expertise

If the question is out of scope, the best answer may be "I really can't speculate on that."

Challenging

Questions expressing legitimate objections and concerns.

- This proposal failed the last time we tried it. What makes you think it will work now?
- You're assuming these interest rates 10 years from now? What if you're wrong?

For the types of questions above, we suggest these simple structures for responding:

SSS:

- State (your position)
- Support (your position)
- Stop (conclude succinctly, without over-answering)

PREP:

- Position (state your position)
- Reason (state why you hold this view)
- Example (give a reason to support your position)
- Position (re-state your position, if necessary)