



Questions from the Audience

What often makes an interpretive program special, and different from a lecture or presentation, is the interaction between the interpreter(s) and the audience. A good rule of thumb is to ask at least three questions every 30 minutes—and remember, that doesn't mean yes/no questions! But interaction also means fielding questions from your audience. Some common questions and techniques you can use are:

Redirect the question: If you feel that a question has put you on the spot (because you're not sure of the answer), admit you're unsure and redirect the question to the entire audience. Get everyone involved, and find out if anyone has a possible answer. Simply stating "That's a good question, and I am not sure what the answer is—does anyone have any thoughts on the subject?" will move the program along. If no one has the answer, then it is something for you (and others) to investigate after the program. Keep in mind, your audience can be a great resource for you—take advantage! And remember, if you don't know the answer to a question, never make something up! It's better just to say, "I don't know," and remind your audience that none of us knows all the answers, but you can help them find it if necessary.

Repeating information: You may get a question about something you already covered in your program. Don't say "I already covered that," or "OK, let me repeat myself" since those type of comments may embarrass that participant. Instead, consider that type of question as a clue to how well your audience is following your program. Perhaps you need to back up and explain some material again—in a different way than before—to help bridge the gap.

Answering a disorganized question: Often children, who don't know what to do with all the attention they have when everyone stops to listen to them, ramble on with a completely disorganized question. Rather than asking that child (or adult) to repeat the question, take your best stab at answering the portion of the question which you understood. You may want to restate the question for everyone so they know which part you're addressing. If you continue to get disorganized questions from one individual, suggest that you speak with that person after the program one-on-one. You may find that his/her questions are clearer when they're not the center of attention.

Multiple questions packaged as one: When a participant asks two, three, or four questions at one time it can be confusing to you and other participants! The best strategy is to answer the questions in the order asked. By stating "That's a lot of questions. Let's take one at a time," you inform the rest of the group that you recognize the problem. By answering them in the order given, you're showing respect to the individual who asked the question. The exception to this would be if there is a logical order to the answers that would help you interpret the overall theme.