



Dealing with the Q & A session

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What's the purpose of a Q&A session?

- usually a 10-minute slot following a 20-minute paper presentation
(sometimes a 5-minute slot following a 15-minute paper – **CHECK!**)
- traditionally, this slot fulfils a number of functions by offering both presenter and participants a valuable opportunity to:
 - clarify anything unclear or confusing
 - develop the topic thread
 - share content knowledge
 - make connections
 - give some advice
 - pose a challenge

SO... **don't miss out** on benefitting from some of these opportunities!

Anticipating some of the likely questions and comments

- try and anticipate in advance the sorts of questions people might ask; if you can, do a 'dry run' of your presentation with a colleague or colleagues beforehand
- some likely questions...
 - *Why did you/didn't you...?*
 - *How did you...?*
 - *I'm surprised you...?*
 - *What might have happened if you'd....?*
 - *Have you thought about...?*
 - *You might be interested to know/think about/read/look at...?*
 - *What do you think is the impact/practical relevance of your?*
 - *What will you do next...?*

Responding to questions and comments



- always try and **respond politely, confidently and calmly** to questions and comments (even the challenging ones!)
- as far as you can, try and **provide an answer drawing on your own knowledge and experience**
- **have a few 'surplus/backup' slides** that you might be able to draw on for giving specific detail in key targeted areas
- if you don't hear or understand the question, **don't be afraid to ask the questioner to repeat or clarify** what they're asking
- if there's a multi-part question, **jot down a word for each part** to help remind you of each bit of the question – and decide your own order for responding

Some useful stock responses to draw on... (but devise your own too?)

- *Thank you – that’s a very good question/point...*
- *I’m not sure at this stage of my research....*
- *I think I’d need to gather more data/conduct further analyses before commenting on that....*
- *You’re right... it is something of a puzzle/weakness/disadvantage but....*
- *I think I’d want to go away and think about that some more....*
- *Thank you, I’ll certainly follow up that project/reference/etc...*
- *Can anyone else offer some advice on this issue/point....?*

Some final words of advice...

- proficient participation in the Q & A interaction following a presentation is a **skill that can be learned and improved** (like any other skill)
- becoming more confident and proficient **requires attention to form and function** in the interaction, and it **requires practice**
- observe how other conference attendees engage in a Q & A session (especially the more senior members of the research community – **how do they model it** – well or poorly?!)
- **develop your own authentic style** – but always try and be supportive and collaborative (e.g. *appreciative – affirming – developmental*)