

**INTERPRETIVE SKILLS I**

**LESSON PLAN:** 12

**SESSION TITLE:** QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

**SESSION LENGTH:** 2 Hours    **ORIG. PREPARED BY:** SWR, 1/83  
PNW, 10/83

**REVISED BY:** K. Cucurullo, 1/92

**OBJECTIVES:** At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the proper use of the three types of questions;
2. Answer visitors' questions correctly and properly.

**TRAINING AIDS:** Flip Chart

**HANDOUTS:** Uses of Questions, Interpretive Questioning Techniques, What is the Question?

Content	Method	Time
I. Short introduction describing the session objectives, the basic techniques to be covered and the group exercises.	Lecture	2-5 Min.
II. Why visitors ask questions of interpreters.	Group Discussion	20 Min.
A. To seek basic information, "Where are the rest rooms?"	Lecture	
B. To simply break the ice as an introduction, "It sure is hot today."	Flip chart	
C. To verify information that they have, "Is it true that Washington really slept here?"		
D. To clarify an issue "I didn't understand your last statement."		
III. Why interpreters ask questions of visitors.	Lecture	
A. To solicit feedback to ensure comprehension.	Group Discussion	
B. To learn more about the group - educational level, area or site expertise, demographic.		
C. To force attention, "Can you all see the snake?"		
D. To control behavior and actions, "Where are you going?" "What are you doing?"		
E. To determine what other interpretive programs they have been to in the area so you can adjust content as necessary.		

Content	Method	Time
F.To cause visitors to think about and understand the "Message" the interpreter is communicating.	Lecture	Cont'd
G.To motivate the group, "Wouldn't it be nice if we took a walking tour around the grounds?"		
H.Another type of question that is often asked is called a rhetorical question. A rhetorical question contains the answer within it, "If you look at a piece of granite, you can see mica, quartz, and feldspar, can't you?". Rhetorical questions never allow visitors to explore, discover, or think for themselves.		
IV.Uses of Questions	Group Discussion	15 Min.
Questions are the interpreters major instructional tool. There are two basic types:	Handout	
A.Open ended: These are questions calling for opinions, views, feelings, or experiences.		
B.Closed ended: These are questions calling for one word or one input answers.		
Exercise: Using the hand out, ask the students to develop some uses for questions and then come up with some examples.		
IV.General tips for asking questions	Lecture	10 Min.
A.Start the question with a "What, when, why, where, or how" to obtain more than a yes - no answer. Group Discussion Lecture		
B.Pause long enough for the audience to formulate an answer. Longer pauses also help visitor to formulate more complex answers. 5 - 15 seconds is a good time to wait for responses.		
C.Encourage the timid to respond, don't let one person dominate.		
D.Do not use a set order for asking questions, don't pick people in a specific order to respond (as going around a circle or from front to back) or the others may not pay attention.		
E.Repeat the question if necessary so all can hear it.		
F.Let one person at a time respond.		

Content	Method	Time
<p>V. The Three Types of Questions</p> <p>NOTE: All of the sample questions that follow are intended only as general illustrations. Area-specific questions should be developed by the instructor in response to the students needs.</p> <p>A.<u>Recall</u> - The recall question is designed to draw information from past to present, feelings, situations or observations. It is a question that invites one to gather data or to draw upon remembered information.</p> <p>The recall question involves completing, counting, describing, listing, matching, observing, recalling, selecting, naming, identifying.</p> <p>What was the name of the first signer of the Declaration of Independence? (Naming)</p> <p>"How did it feel when you touched the snake?" (Describing)</p> <p>What are the three types of rock? (Listing)</p> <p>Describe the designs on that chair.(Describing)</p> <p>How does the stone appear to be unusual? (Observing)</p> <p>"Can you spot the blue Heron in the flock of storks?" (Selecting)</p> <p>B.<u>Process</u> - The process question is designed to have the visitor draw some relationships among the data or information recalled by comparing, inferring or explaining.</p> <p>The process question may involve analyzing, classifying, comparing, contrasting, distinguishing, experimenting, explaining, grouping, inferring, making analogies, organizing, sequencing.</p> <p>Is this room built differently from the others we've visited? (Comparing)</p> <p>There are both pine trees and cacti here. How are they alike and different? (Comparing and Contrasting)</p> <p>How can we solve this problem about congestion in the park?" (Problem solving)</p> <p>Can you arrange these photographs according to when they were taken?" (Sequencing)</p>	<p>Group Discussion</p> <p>Handout</p>	<p>20 Min.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p>C. <u>Application</u> - The application question is designed to cause the visitor to go beyond the data or concept which he has developed, and to use it in a new or hypothetical situation.</p> <p>Application questions may involve evaluating, applying a principle, building models, evaluating, extrapolating, finding examples, forecasting, generalizing, hypothesizing, imagining, inventing, judging, predicting, speculating, and theorizing.</p> <p>"If this beetle spreads what will happen to the trees?" (Predicting)</p> <p>"If these exhibits continue to be exposed to sunlight, how might this affect our evaluation of the technique?" (evaluating)</p> <p>"Can you imagine what it would be like a union soldier during the Civil War?" (Imagining)</p> <p>"From what we've said about animal adaptation, can you find some other examples of adaptation while we are on our walk?" (Applying a principle)</p> <p>ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION:</p> <p>Notice that the RECALL question is often asked in the past tense: "What <u>did</u> you leave home?" "What <u>were</u> their names?" "How <u>was</u> the table arranged?" Although it is not always true, the past tense is often a clue to identifying the recall level question. When the visitor speaks in the past tense, it is often a clue that they are operating at the recall level of thinking.</p> <p>The PROCESS question is often asked in the present tense: " How <u>can</u> we solve this problem?" "How <u>does</u> this object compare with that one?" "Why <u>do</u> you think so?" When you observe or hear visitors using the present tense, it is often a clue that he is thinking at the process level.</p> <p>The subjective and future verb forms as well as conditional clauses generally set the tone for APPLICATION questions: "What <u>will</u> happen <u>if</u>...?" "What <u>might be</u> the outcome <u>if</u> ...?" "What <u>should</u> we do <u>if</u>...?" Another clue to the application question is the inclusion of a value-laden word. Such a word causes the visitor to make value judgments or to evaluate. For example: "Would it be <u>better</u> if we started on the trail or in the cave?" "What would be the <u>fair</u> thing to do?" " Of all the parks you've visited, which one do you <u>prefer</u>?"</p>	<p>Group Discussion</p> <p>Handout</p>	<p>Cont'd</p>

Content	Method	Time
VI. Sequencing Questions	Lecture	5 Min.
<p>The proper sequence (or order) of questions helps comprehension while a random jumping from type to type causes frustration and a lack of learning. Generally the sequence is recall, process, application. Visitors must receive or be able to recall information before they can process it. They must process it before they can apply it. There might be several recall questions, then a few processing questions and a final application question.</p>		
VII. Practical Exercises	Discussion Gathering Mode	15 Min.
<p>Option #1: Each participant is asked to write out one example of each of the 3 types of questions that have been used in their own interpretive presentation. If the participant does not use one or more of the 3 types in a presentation, they should make up a question of that type for possible use.</p>		
<p>The group is asked to share their questions with the class.</p>	Discussion Gathering Mode	15 Min.
<p>Option #2: Using any of the three types of talks (ie. Talk, Walk, Illustrated) that you have developed in this class, list the objectives that you wanted the "visitors" to know. Develop a series of questions to reach that objective using proper sequencing and all three types of questions</p>		
<p>The group is asked to share their questions with the class.</p>		
VIII. Answering visitor questions	Discussion Gathering Mode	15 Min.
<p>Visitors probably have asked you questions which, taken at face value, do not make sense. From the visitors' point of view, the questions usually do. But, because of the lack of knowledge about the subject being interpreted, visitors must adapt their questions about your subject to their own experiences and understand. Upon asking these seemingly ignorant questions, visitors put the interpreter into the challenging situation of figuring out what the visitors really want to know, and then responding properly.</p>		

Content	Method	Time
<p>Most interpreters can recall a question which is asked over and over again by visitors. Some are just routine and easy to understand, but then there are those questions which seem to be totally out of context. For instance, how many times have you been asked, "Is it real?" by a visitor who is standing in front of an object. Obviously it is real! You can see it, feel it, maybe even smell it. It does exist - it is real.</p> <p>The visitors' concept of "real" may not be so elementary. A museum is filled with items which the visitor is not allowed to touch. The interpreter always refers to the items as something from another time. Can the visitor accept them as "real"? Average people do not have much experience with antique or historic objects in their everyday life. To them the actual or "real" object is an unusual thing. When they see some historic object among others which are not, they can become confused or lose track of which items are "really historic." Hence, is this real?</p> <p>Hearing what a visitor has asked and knowing what he asked is often two different questions.</p> <p>1. Hints on answering visitors questions</p> <p>a.If you do not know the answer, tell them that you haven't had that question yet and you would be happy to find out the answer. Don't bluff!</p> <p>b.If you don't understand the question, ask for more information or a rephrasing.</p> <p>c.If there is a better place or time in you talk to answer the question, give a short answer now and more later.</p> <p>d.Repeat the question, if necessary, so all can hear it.</p> <p>e.Don't always answer directly, give a "clue" or help them figure it out themselves.</p>	<p>Discussion Gathering Mode</p>	<p>Cont'd</p>
<p>Each participant is asked to share their examples with the group. The group is allowed to comment on the examples and offer possible other meanings to visitors' vague questions.</p>	<p>Discussion</p>	<p>10 Min.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p data-bbox="142 268 354 296">IX.Conclusion</p> <ol data-bbox="191 331 1052 611" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="191 331 1052 422">1.Describe 3 types of questions an interpreter can use to involve the visitor in his presentation. Discussion Gathering Mode</li> <li data-bbox="191 457 1052 548">2.How are these questions used for obtaining feedback to find out how much visitors are understanding about your interpretive presentation?</li> <li data-bbox="191 554 1052 611">3.Do interpreters know the visitors' jargon well enough to answer questions properly?</li> </ol> <p data-bbox="142 716 256 743"><b><u>SOURCES</u></b></p> <p data-bbox="142 779 971 869"><u>Interpretive Skills for Environmental Communication</u>, 2nd edition, John W. Hanna, Texas A&amp;M University, pp. 275-278</p> <p data-bbox="142 905 1052 932"><u>Training Methods Manual</u>, USNPS, p.p. 30 -32, 1991 edition</p>	Discussion	5 Min.

HANDOUTS  
FOR  
QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES



## USES OF QUESTIONS

Questions are the interpreters major instructional tool. There are two basic types:

- Open ended, calling for opinions, views, feelings, or experiences;
- Close ended, calling for one word or one input answers.

Questions may be directed to two different "targets" -- the group or the individual. Group questions are for all to consider and anyone to answer, while individual questions are directed to one person, usually called by name.

There is an art to asking thought-provoking questions, and considerable time is required to develop constructive group thinking through questions. Below are examples of questions and their suggested uses.

Keep discussion on target

- Interesting point. Can you relate that to the earlier point made?
- Whoa! What was the original question asked?

Assess and evaluate information

- Given this data, what conclusions can we draw?
- Do the facts justify the conclusions? Why? Why not?
- How does this information stack up against your experience?

Suggest desired response

- Wouldn't this be a better way?
- 10% seems about right, doesn't it?

If you want to find out if somebody knows something, what's the first, most obvious thing you should do?

Determine understanding/test learning

- What are the first three steps in this process?
- How would you paraphrase this policy in your own words?
- If you were faced with an overpopulation of deer, how would you manage your resources?
- Why is it necessary to follow these steps in sequence?

Get agreement, solutions, or conclusions

- What possible conclusions can we draw from this information?
- Do any of you disagree with what's been said?
- What's the end result of all this?
- When you add it all together, what does all of this mean to us as visitors?"

## Skills I

## WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

## Questioning

Identify the following questions as RECALL (R), PROCESS (P), or APPLICATION (A), by placing the correct letter before each question.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Where is the Mountain?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Can I drive my RV to Camp Muir?
- \_\_\_\_\_ When do the rivers get full?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What is that Big Tree?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Where can I go swimming in the hot springs?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Where is the boat the pilot wheel came from?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is this where I get my Golden Age Pass?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How often do you close The Arch because of the wind?
- \_\_\_\_\_ How did you feel moving from the desert to here?
- \_\_\_\_\_ When did Paradise open this year?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Does the moss harm the trees?
- \_\_\_\_\_ What is the difference between moss and lichen?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Where is the GRAVE of the Patriarchs?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If this beetle spreads, what will happen to the tree?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you were an animal and had to give up one sense, which would it be?

## Skills I

## Questioning

- ANSWERS -  
WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

Identify the following questions as RECALL (R), PROCESS (P), or APPLICATION (A), by placing the correct letter before each question.

  R   Where is the Mountain?

  A   Can I drive my RV to Camp Muir?

  P   When do the rivers get full?

  R   What is that Big Tree?

  A   Where can I go swimming in the hot springs?

  P   Where is the boat the pilot wheel came from?

  R   Is this where I get my Golden Age Pass?

  A   How often do you close The Arch because of the wind?

  P   How did you feel moving from the desert to here?

  R   When did Paradise open this year?

  A   Does the moss harm the trees?

  P   What is the difference between moss and lichen?

  R   Where is the GRAVE of the Patriarchs?

  A   If this beetle spreads, what will happen to the tree?

  P   If you were an animal and had to give up one sense, which would it be?

INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONING                      TECHNIQUES

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF QUESTIONS INVOLVE A VARIETY OF PEOPLE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.

1. RECALL QUESTIONS

easiest

...are designed to draw information from the visitor based on his/her own experiences and observations. They are generally easy for people to answer and help to break the ice and get the visitors involved.

Examples:

How many different kinds of trees can you see from here?  
 How many of you are from an area that was affected by glaciation?  
     Where do you get your food?  
     Have you ever seen a forest fire?

2.     PROCESS QUESTIONS

more difficult

...are designed to help the visitor draw relationships or comparisons based on processing the information at hand.

Examples:

What similarities do you see among the trees here?  
     Can you see any signs of there having been glaciers here?  
     How do you think the people of Fort Vancouver got their food in the  
         1830's?  
 How do you think a fire would affect this forest?

3.     APPLICATION QUESTIONS

most challenging

...help visitors use creative thinking to draw new conclusions, going beyond the information or observations at hand.

Examples:

Why do you think conifers are so common in the Northwest?  
 What would this place look like if there was another ice age?  
 What sorts of thing will people be saying about our culture 100 years from           now?  
 What do you think would happen to this forest if all fires were suppressed?  
 What would you do if you were in charge of managing this park/forest?

REMEMBER THAT QUESTIONS ARE INTERPRETIVE **TOOLS** - LIKE OTHER TOOLS, THEY HAVE A SPECIFIC PURPOSE. BEFORE YOU ASK IT, KNOW THE PURPOSE OF YOUR QUESTION!