



An Invitational Education®
Member Resource

Title:	Open-ended questions
Shared by: (Your Name, State, Country)	Judy Lehr Guarino, St. Augustine, FL Craig Martin
Email Address:	jbguarino@gmail.com
Type of Activity or Resource:	Mini-lecture/Activity
Objective:	To teach key words to phrases which will enable the participants to “get a conversation off the ground” and help another person to “open up.”
Recommended Age Group:	elementary-adult
Materials Needed:	
Time:	40 minutes
Additional Notes:	

All Rights Reserved: This Invitational Education Member Resource remains the property of the author and is intended for use in educational settings. No portion of this document may be used for commercial purposes or reproduced for any other purpose without written permission from the author or copyright holder.

Open-ended Questions

Objective(s):

To teach key words to phrases which will enable the participants to "get a conversation off the ground" and help another person to "open up."

To enhance awareness of the difficulty of simply listening.

Age:

Elementary to adult

Procedure:

Brief mini-lecture and follow-up activity

Mini-lecture:

Everyone worries about being attractive. We spend billions of dollars a year on cosmetics and hair sprays, and we spend hundreds of hours in front of the mirror wondering if we look good enough. When we are curious about other people, they are attracted to us. How do you feel when someone is interested in what you think and how you feel?

Open-ended questions are questions that begin with words or phrases designed to evoke an elaborate answer from the other person. Close-ended questions are questions that can be answered with one word or a short phrase. When we want to get to know people, we want to avoid close-ended questions.

Activity:

1. Provide a copy of Handout 20.A entitled, "Open-ended Questions" [page 62] to each participant.
2. Divide the participants into dyads, preferably with someone who is a stranger.
3. Ask each dyad to designate a person A and a person B.
4. Person A should be instructed to create an open-ended question from each word and/or phrase listed on the handout. Tell person A that each question does not have to be on the same subject. Person B must respond to each question. If person B feels that the question is too personal, he or she may say, "pass."

5. Person A must listen to person B's response without comment. When person B is finished answering a question, person A must go on to the next question. Emphasize the importance of this rule!
6. Reverse the procedure and instruct person B to be the questioner and person A the answerer.
7. Suggested questions when the large group reassembles:
 - A. How did it feel to be asked about yourself?
 - B. Did anyone break the "no comment" rule when it was your turn to ask questions? Why?
 - C. What do you do if you ask an open-ended question and the other person STILL doesn't want to talk?

Handout 20.A Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions are designed to help evoke an elaborate answer from someone.

Close-ended questions are those questions which require a short one-word answer.

Close-ended questions begin with the following words:

Are? Who? Do? When? Where? Which?

Open-ended questions usually begin with the following words or phrases:

How? Why? In what way? Tell me about... What?

Open-ended questions are appropriate to help someone open up, to promote conversation, and to find out more about the way a person thinks and feels.

Close-ended questions usually prevent a conversation from "getting off the ground."