

How to respond to questions

16

In this lesson you will learn how to deal with difficult or unexpected questions in large meetings.

Starter

- 1 When there are plans for large new building developments (e.g. shopping centres, office blocks) in your country are there ever objections or protests? Why or why not?
- 2 Many business leaders and politicians are very skilful at dealing with difficult questions. Put these techniques in order of how successful you consider them. Which techniques do you think are most used and which least used?
_____ being truthful
_____ rewording the question
_____ avoiding the question
_____ asking questions back
_____ giving a positive spin
_____ using jargon
_____ postponing the question

Expressions

- 16.1
- 1 A massive retail and leisure park has been planned for the town of Kimberley, South Africa. Jomo Anduvate is head of communications for the team of architects and has just presented the plans to a large public meeting. Listen to some questions from the audience after his talk. What are the issues they want to know about?
 - 2 Read the following questions. In each case, find which one of the answers is not in the recording. Then listen to check and find the language used.
 - 1 How does Jomo indicate who should ask the next question?
 - a He describes where someone is sitting.
 - b He describes someone's hair colour.
 - c He describes what someone is doing.
 - d He describes what someone is wearing.
 - 2 Which of these ways does Jomo use to deal with questions?
 - a He says that the question is one he is keen to answer.
 - b He says he doesn't know.
 - c He says they have published information which the questioner can check.
 - d He says the questioner should answer the question themselves.

Speaking

- 1 Imagine that the room where you are studying right now (and the nearby area) is going to be dramatically redesigned and improved. Take a few minutes to make some ambitious plans for this work. When you are ready, briefly give a presentation about your intentions and then respond to your teacher's questions.



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Language box

The word *nothing* is used in many important expressions.

Nothing short of / less than + noun phrase or adjective emphasizes how extreme a situation is:

It's nothing short of a disaster.

What she did was nothing less than miraculous.

The expression *nothing if not* is used to emphasize the quantity or strength of an adjective describing a person:

She's nothing if not creative.

Use the expression *if nothing else* to talk about something that you consider the only positive aspect of a negative experience:

The negotiations were a complete failure but, if nothing else, we had a break from the office.

Hint

Buy extra thinking time when answering questions by using one or more of these common words or phrases: **Well, OK, Right, Ah, Yes, Thank you, Mmm, Good question**

Note: When you say Er you sound more uncertain.

- 3 Look at some of Jomo's responses to the questions. Each sentence is missing one word. Choose from the words below and put each one in the correct sentence and position.

to maybe do may by

- 1 Right, now I'd be very happy to answer any questions you have.
- 2 As I tried to make clear earlier - we firmly believe that this is a positive development for the town.
- 3 I can return to this matter later on.
- 4 Well, what exactly do you mean 'eyesore'?
- 5 Well, that's a good question and, yes, you're right a degree.



Writing

- 1 Gabriela Mitchell's software company Gabbyware recently released a major new computer program. Unfortunately, it has a major bug. Read the internet article reporting a press conference Gabriela gave to her key buyers and a team of journalists. Using your own ideas, fill in her missing answers and then finish the interview.

I was one of over 150 people who squeezed into the London offices this morning to hear Mrs Mitchell defend Gabbyware's disastrous new program Redesigner. Here, in her own words, are the answers to audience questions. Was she honest and helpful? You decide!

Audience: Can you explain exactly what the problem is with Redesigner?

GM: _____

Audience: Why do you think this happened?

GM: _____

Audience: What is Gabbyware going to do to help the thousands of users who are likely to have serious problems with this?

GM: _____

Look

Look at listening script 16.1 on pages 127-128 and find expressions using the word *nothing*. Rephrase each one in your own words without using the word *nothing*.

Nothing of the kind is a very strong way of saying that you disagree. It can also be used to stop someone doing something:

You seem to think it's amusing. It's *nothing of the kind*.

A I'd like to lead the team.

B You'll do *nothing of the kind*!

There's nothing to it means that something is very easy:

Of course I can close the deal. There's *nothing to it*.

If something is worth *next to nothing*, it is nearly valueless:

This contacts list is worth *next to nothing*.

Lesson record

3 new words

from this lesson

1

2

3

3 useful phrases

from this lesson

1

2

3

Things to remember

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