

## Open Ended Questions

It is important, as adult facilitators, that we ask open-ended questions from the very start of the season. Higher order reasoning, such as synthesis and evaluation, is stimulated through the use of open-ended questions[1]. By asking open-ended questions, you are encouraging your students to think of other possibilities and even develop self-reliance. As a Destination Imagination Team Manager, Coordinator, or Parent; it is even more important to use open-ended questions since asking closed-ended questions could cause or even be interference. Check out the information below to further understand the importance of asking and how to ask open-ended questions. For more information about interference, check out the Rules of Interference section in the Rules of the Road

Characteristics of an open-ended question include:[2]

- Requires more than a yes or no answer
- Requires more than a short answer, such as a specific fact or number
- Often start with “What...,” “How...,” “Why. . .”
- Can also be phrased as statement: “Tell me...,” “Describe . . .,” “Please explain . . .”
- May take the participant a few seconds to think about their answer
- There are no right or wrong answers

It is important to remember the characteristics of open-ended questions when framing your conversation with the students. Your DI team will try to pick up on any outside clue they can to figure out if you like what they are doing. For example, consider what the following question suggests.

Do you think you should go ahead and keep working on your script from last meeting?

The team, after hearing that question, may feel pressure to keep working on their script, regardless; if they think it is done or not. In comparison, consider the following more open-ended version.

How do you feel about the script that you were working on last meeting?

This version calls students’ attention to a particular aspect, without the strong indication they have to keep working on it. Anytime you feel like you are about to ask a yes-no question or suggest they work on a component, stop and try to re-phrase your question or statement. It is your role to encourage your students to complete each element of their Team Challenge, so encourage them to think about with a question. If the team says they feel good about that element, then leave it alone and ask the team what they would like to work on next.

Asking open-ended questions is great way to respond when the team is asking you a question. Remember, as the Team Manager, Parent, or Coordinator; you cannot contribute ideas or suggestions to the solution. Let’s take the example from the Roadmap to see how this can work.

Team Member asks, “Why won’t this gear turn properly?”

Team Manager responds with, “What are some reasons you can think of that could be keeping it from turning properly?”

The open-ended question encourages the students to come up with their own solutions. The Team Manager can then ask a follow-up open-ended question and keep the conversation going until the team comes up with a solution. If the Team Manager answered, then it would be interference and stop the students from engaging in higher order thinking.

How comfortable are you with asking open-ended questions? It takes practice, but asking open-ended questions will be worth the effort when you what your students created all on their own. To help get you started, here is a list of open-ended questions that you can keep at the ready.

- How do you feel about [insert challenge element]?
- What kind of information do you need in order to go forward?
- Why is that happening?
- What skills do you need to learn?
- Describe how you did that.
- Tell me what you want to work on next time.
- How can you work together to accomplish [insert challenge element]?
- What do you think will happen at tournament with [prop, background, misc.]?
- How can you solve the problem with [insert object]?
- Please explain to me how that fulfills one of the scoring elements.