

Teaching with Q&A

Is Q&A the best?

- Does the material lend itself to Q&A style? Is the topic really hard?
- If the material is not the best for Q&A, could you still teach application this way? Could you have the class practice a method you teach and use Q&A to do that?
- Is the class size too large for this method? Will you not get the engagement that you want from this method? Will the layout of the room hurt this method? Too large? Too many columns?
- Are there cultural concerns where Q&A is not an effective way to teach? Are there generational concerns and the group does not want Q&A or they see Q&A as their way to teach (and they don't have to learn!).

Have a plan

- What are the goals or outcomes that you want the audience to get? COVER THESE!
- Ask questions that drive to these goals. Don't ask questions that don't drive the class towards these goals.
- Focus on real engagement with the audience over your questions, not just a simple yes/no answer from the audience. They should be using reasoning or critical thinking skills.
- Always manage time. Don't let a good/great discussion eclipse covering all of the outcomes or goals.

Over prepare

- You need depth of knowledge on your topic. Don't try to “wing it” or “rest on your laurels” with this method.
- Be flexible - with Q&A you have to be willing for a conversation to add material, to go in different directions (although you may have to reign it in).
- Order your questions to move from general to specific, easy to harder, more responses to more thinking, etc.
- As the teacher, actively listen to the class. Mirror their phrases or language. Label emotions, processes, etc. You may not be 100% correct, but the audience will fine-tune and this is what you want.
- Balance encouraging the students with challenging their answers or points of view.

The room contributes

- Adopt the view that the smartest person in the room, IS the room. Contributing together (under the right circumstances) produces better learning than just you alone.
- Does the room have enough background knowledge to contribute? Would you do Q&A on the attributes of God with a new believer? If you are leading a Sunday School class of established families, can they contribute? More likely!
- Is the room hostile to your view, are they negative, are you having to win them over? This may argue for more teaching or for longer Q&A as you challenge their point of view.
- Don't be afraid of silence. The room will feel uncomfortable too and someone will talk. Know who is going to talk every time so you can help them give others a chance.

Helpful things to say

Thanks for sharing. What do others think?

Let's be brief so we can hear what others think too.

I see your perspective, let's think about it from other angles too

Interesting point. Why do you think others might see it differently

What leads you to that conclusion?

Could there be another explanation?

Does anyone else have a different take on this?

That's a common answer, but [evidence] suggests

What's one part of today that stood out to you?