

Examples of Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questions

Rab Nawaz Jadoon
Ph.D Scholar (Social Informatics)
COMSATS IIT Abbottabad

In a conversation, when completing a research survey, being interviewed for a job or working on a homework assignment, you might find yourself presented with a series of closed-ended or open-ended questions. Close-ended questions are those which can be answered by a simple "yes" or "no," while open-ended questions are those which require more thought and more than a simple one-word answer.

Close-Ended Questions

If you can answer a question with only a "yes" or "no" response, then you are answering a close-ended type of question.

Examples of close-ended questions are:

- Are you feeling better today?
- May I use the bathroom?
- Is the prime rib a special tonight?
- Should I date him?
- Will you please do me a favor?
- Are you pregnant?
- Are you happy?
- Is he dead?

Close-ended questions should not always be thought of as simple questions that anyone can quickly answer merely because they require a yes or no answer. Close-ended questions can also be very complicated. For example, "Is 1 in binary equal to 1 in counting numbers?" is a close-ended question that not everyone would be able to quickly answer.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are ones that require more than one word answers. The answers could come in the form of a list, a few sentences or something longer such as a speech, paragraph or essay.

Here are some examples of open-ended questions:

- What were the most important wars fought in the history of the United States?
- What are you planning to buy today at the supermarket?
- How exactly did the fight between the two of you start?
- What is your favorite memory from childhood?

- How will you help the company if you are hired to work for us?
- What do you plan to do immediately following graduation from college?
- What types of decorations do you plan to have for your friend's birthday party?
- What was your high school experience like?
- How did you and your best friend meet?
- What sites do you expect to see on your vacation?
- How exactly does one replace the screen to a cellular phone?

Although open-ended questions require lengthier responses than do close-ended questions, open-ended questions are not always more complicated. For example, asking "What are you planning to buy today at the supermarket?" may simply require the respondent to read off of a list.

When These Questions Are Used

Either type of question can be used in a wide variety of scenarios. However, if you're looking for a guide to liken these types of questions to, you can think of close-ended questions as multiple choice questions on a school exam and open-ended questions as short responses and essay questions on an exam.

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions require a response with more depth and a lengthier response. Open-ended questions are also helpful in finding out more about a person or a situation, whether it's during an interview, at a party, or when getting to know a new friend.

Close-ended Questions

Close-ended questions can be answered in only one word or very short phrase. Close-ended questions can also be used in the situations mentioned above, although they have the potential to end the conversation.