

COMMUNICATION SKILLS – Questioning for Specifics

TYPE OF INFORMATION YOU ARE SEEKING	POSSIBLE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK
Seeking thoughts	<i>What do you think about... ? What are your thoughts?</i>
Seeking observations	<i>What did you see happening? What happened? Describe the events as they unfolded.</i>
Seeking feelings	<i>How did you feel as a result of....? What are you feeling? What impact did your feelings have on your actions?</i>
Seeking information about cause and effect.	<i>What do you think has led to a decrease in problems?</i>
Clarifying meaning (when there is room for different interpretations)	<i>What do you mean by....? What did you mean when you said respect?</i>
Wanting the speaker to talk from his/her own perspective rather than, “Everyone agrees...”	<i>How would you describe the situation? How does the situation affect you? Speaking for yourself, what is the impact on your performance?</i>
When you want to focus on discrepancies in the speaker’s words.	<i>Earlier you said... and just now you said.... Those seem to be different. What connection do you see between your two statements?</i>
When you want to disarm or deflect attention away from a destructive interchange.	Ask question that redirects them to a different topic.
When you want the person to reflect on some aspect of the situation that they haven’t already discussed .	Take a word or phrase they have used and ask a question related to the word or phrase.
Seeking elaboration	<i>Talk more about.... What else? What other ideas, thoughts do you have about it?</i>
Seeking evaluation	<i>What are the advantages? disadvantages? How important is...on a scale of 1 to 10</i>

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Seeking specific examples	<i>What is an example of what you mean? For instance? Such as?</i>
Seeking information about relationship —past, present.	How has it been when you worked together on projects? How were things between you before the incident?
Seeking information related to a change .	How was the decision made? What was your role in the decision making? What is different for you? What did you have then that you don't have now? What do you have now that you didn't have before? How have others responded to the change? What does it mean for you that things are different now?
Seeking specific data .	What information is missing? What do you need to know? How did you get the information? What is your understanding of the policy? What would ___ say if asked about this information? What impact would more information have on your decision? Your performance?
Seeking underlying interests .	What is most important to you? What concerns you most about the situation? How does ___ affect you? If you had..., how would that help? If you had..., what would you have that you want/need?
Reality Check questions— When you want other(s) to consider consequences of no resolution.	What will happen if you aren't able to resolve your differences? What will happen if you don't reach agreement? What could be the worst outcome for you? How much will it cost you personally—time, money, resources, emotional effort—to take this matter further (another method of resolution)? What is your worst alternative to reaching agreement? What is your best alternative to reaching an agreement?
Seeking options and solutions .	How do you want this to work out? What ideas do you have to fix this? What options can you think of? How would you like to see this resolved?