



Rhetorical Questions

While rhetorical questions do not require an answer from your audience, they will get the audience to think more deeply about your topic.

Guidelines for use of rhetorical questions

- Use them carefully
- Do not overuse them
- Make sure they truly engage the audience
- Design them to stimulate deep thought or puzzlement
- Make sure they have an immediate connection to the audience
- Make sure they have an immediate connection to the topic

Caution

- Follow each one with a brief pause to allow your audience to consider what you have asked.
- An immediate move from your rhetorical question to the next item in your speech negates any power the question might have in stimulating thought.

Examples:

Rhetorical question:

“Wouldn’t it be nice if you never had to take any classes before noon?”

Direct question (not rhetorical):

“Let me take a voice vote. How many of you would like it if we never had to take a class before noon?”

Hasling, J. (1976). *The audience, the message, the speaker* (pp. 93). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Swartzman, R., *Fundamentals of Oral Communication*. 1st Edition

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