

DIY Guide Guidance for School Governors Questioning and Listening Skills

How should you ask questions?

Answer: In a way that is the most likely to get a full, open and honest answer.

The potential for this to happen is greater if questions are unbiased and do not reveal your position on the subject. Don't be frightened of silence but wait for the answer.

When the answer comes, you should pay full attention to what is being said, and not be framing your reply while the other person is talking.

If the information required for a full answer is not readily available, you should agree a time and method for follow-up. When you do this, remember to follow up and don't leave it hanging in the air until the next meeting when the whole process might have to be repeated!

To achieve the full and open answer:

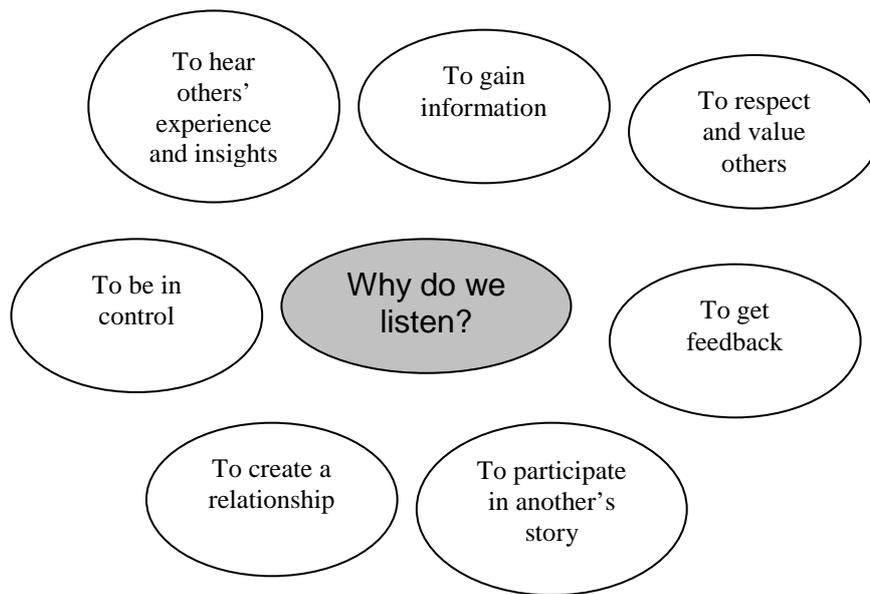
- Be assertive but not aggressive
- Be sensitive
- Do your homework first
- Don't always expect an immediate answer
- Ask in a way that is always constructive – especially if the questions might imply criticism.

When asking the more challenging questions – those requiring an explanation and not just information – 'the five "Ws" of assertiveness' may help. These are:

- What I like (begin on a positive note)
- What I don't like (the shared problem)
- What I want (sufficient knowledge to understand the problem)
- What will happen if I don't get it (not a threat but an indication of possible negative consequences)
- What will happen if I do get it (an indication of possible positive consequences)

You will not need the whole framework for your initial question, but it is important to begin and end on a positive note. You might need to bring in further parts for supplementary questions if a full answer is not forthcoming.

WHY DO WE LISTEN?



Listening – something we do for so much of our time – is perhaps one of the most important skills we have, yet it is least recognised and often neglected.

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS AS A LISTENER



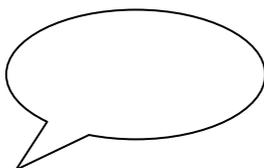
- Face the speaker squarely
- Maintain good eye contact
- Maintain an open posture
- Remain relatively relaxed

ATTENDING PHYSICALLY



- What is being said?
- How is it being said?
- What is not being said?
- What feelings and emotions are expressed and what are not?

ATTENDING PSYCHOLOGICALLY



- Active questioning
- Verbal encouragement
- Supportive statements
- Key word repetition
- Reflective statements

ATTENDING VERBALLY