



Dear Students,

This month's topic is '**Asking Questions**'. Students spend a lot of time *answering* questions - exam questions, interview questions, application questions and class questions. Now let's talk about *asking* questions!

Asking questions is a skill - a skill just as important as answering questions. Like other skills, it is something that you can practice and develop.

#### WHY ASK QUESTIONS?

**Questions** make you stand out in a crowd at job fairs, interviews, or events.

**Questions** identify problems and solutions.

**Questions** help you engage with people in social interactions and build relationships.

**Questions** fuel innovation and invention.

**Questions** show that you are prepared and engaged.

**Questions** help you find out if a potential employer or job is a good fit for you.

**Questions** clarify something you don't understand.

**Questions** help you make more informed choices and decisions.

**Questions** show your appreciation for someone taking the time to speak to you.

**"One of the very important characteristics of a student is to question.  
Let the students ask questions."**

**-APJ Abdul Kalam**

#### How do I ask a good question?

- Make sure your question is **focused**. Ask one thing at a time. Prioritize the thing you want to know the most.
- Think about the **purpose** of your question before you ask it. Identify what information you want to find out.
- Ask **open-ended** questions that invite someone to respond with more than "yes," "no" or another one-word answer.
- Ask questions to the **appropriate** person. Make sure your question is relevant to the person who you are talking to.
- Be **prepared**. When you are attending an event, meeting someone new, or going to an interview, do some research. Think about who you are meeting and brainstorm 2-3 questions you would like to ask them.
- **Listen** to the person you are talking to. Don't interrupt.
- Ask a **follow-up** question if it's an appropriate setting.
- Make **eye contact**.
- Speak **clearly** and **confidently**.

#### What is an open-ended question?

An **open-ended** question requires thought and produces a multi-word or multi-sentence answer.

A **closed-ended** question can be answered with "yes," "no" or another one-word answer.

**Open-ended** questions promote conversation.

**Closed-ended** questions can make conversations stop.

**Open-ended** questions feel like a discussion.

**Closed-ended** questions can feel like an interrogation.

**Open-ended** questions start with words like:

- Why
- How
- What
- Describe
- Tell me

**Closed-ended** questions start with words like:

- Are/was
- Do/did
- Would
- Will

Examples:

**Open:** What do you like about this company?

**Closed:** Do you like this company?

**Open:** Tell me about your classes.

Closed: Are you a student?

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it,  
I would use the first 55 minutes determining the proper questions to ask."

-Albert Einstein

#### How do I make conversation with someone I don't know well?

**Ask open-ended questions!** Questions can help you avoid awkward conversations and to keep the discussion flowing.

Try these five conversation starters the next time you meet someone new:

1. I'm looking for a new book. Do you have any to recommend?
2. What was the highlight of your day today?
3. What is the most useful app on your phone and why?
4. What's your dream job?
5. What song always puts you in a good mood? When did you first hear it?

For inspiration, watch these two TED talks:

- RJ and Actress Malavika Varadan gives tips on [7 Ways to Make Conversation with Anyone](#).
- An American college student shares how she used questions to go from feeling alone to connecting with others in [How to Skip the Small Talk and Connect with Anyone](#).

#### What questions should I ask in an interview?

Do you have any questions for *me*?

Potential job or internships candidates are often asked this question at the end of an interview. There is a right answer to this question - **YES!**

Don't miss this opportunity to set yourself apart AND to find out more about your potential employer.

This is your chance to show:

- you are thoughtful and engaged
- you've done your research about the company
- you care about this job

Read this [article](#) for examples of good questions to ask, such as:

- What do the most successful candidates do in their first month here?
- Why did you decide to work at this company?
- What are some challenges one might face in this role?

"We run this company on questions, not answers."

-Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman, Alphabet, Inc. (Google's parent company)

#### How do people in my field use questions in their work?

When listening to your professors, supervisors, speakers on your campus, and videos on the web, don't just hear the answers they are giving. Listen for the questions they ask. Make a note of them. Pay attention to how experts use questions to further research and ideas in their field.

Try it with these two TED talks:

- **Engineering Students:** [How to Ask Good Questions](#) by David Stork, Distinguished Research Scientist and Research Director, Rambus Labs
- **Medical Students:** [How Do We Heal Medicine](#) by Atul Gawande, Surgeon and Best-selling Author

#### How can I connect with FFE Scholars on my campus and across India?

Student Coordinators will be organizing on-campus meetings for their groups, with a focus topic of "Asking Questions." **Make sure you attend** - there will be activities to help you build your question asking skills.

Student Coordinator groups will be asked to post questions on the [FFE Facebook](#) group. Come join the conversation by answering and asking questions of your own.

If you don't have a Student Coordinator, post a question in the [FFE Facebook](#) group. It can be anything that will help us get to know each other better. Or send us an [email](#) with any questions you have and FFE will post them.

We will end this edition with a question of our own - **What questions would you like to see covered in future emailers?**  
(Questions/answers welcome by email, FB or through your Student Coordinator).

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