

Rhetorical Questions in Presentations

What's the definition of a rhetorical question? Why is that better than most other kinds of questions in a presentation?

Cross off any questions below which aren't clearly rhetorical, i.e. could be taken as a real question. (It can depend on context, so think about giving a presentation in front of this class of people or your next real presentation audience).

- Do you feel cold?
- Do you like cheese?
- Am I a Hollywood movie star?
- Do you want world peace?
- Have you achieved everything that you have ever dreamed of?
- Have you ever been to Indonesia?
- Have you ever wondered why the sky is blue?
- How are you?
- How many people here hate Xmas music in restaurants?
- How many people in this country are truly happy?
- That was a great presentation, wasn't it?
- The king of Bhutan decided to force democracy on his country. What happened next?
- What can we do about the world economy?
- What's the most important chemical in the universe?
- What's the population of Tokyo?
- Who wants to be homeless?
- Why do people dream?

Find the best and worst examples of those which are left.

What are the criteria of successful rhetorical questions in presentations?

Compare your ideas with the list on the next page.

- Few or no people in the audience know the answer
- Makes the audience concentrate on the answer
- Makes the audience think
- No one tries to answer
- No one wonders whether they should answer
- The answer is so obvious that it can't really be a question
- The answer is so complicated that it can't really be a question

Find at least one example of each of those things above.

Which are the most important criteria above?

Use those criteria to choose the top three rhetorical questions above.

In pairs, check that all the questions in your presentation are rhetorical questions or survey questions.

Try to add rhetorical questions to other points in your presentation.

Are there now too many rhetorical questions? If so, which would be best to take out?

Write similar criteria for survey questions and use them to improve your presentation.