

AUDIENCE RESPONSE SYSTEM TIPS

The following is a list of tips & techniques for presenters using the Audience Response System (ARS).

The set-up for the ARS will be as follows - there will be 2 screens at the front of the conference room, one for the PowerPoint/35mm presentations, and one for the ARS. There will be a laptop at the podium for presenters to control their PowerPoint slides and the ARS will be run from a separate laptop.

It is preferable that ARS questions NOT be included on a PowerPoint slide during your presentation, but only shown on the ARS screen. If you have a slide that has pertinent information to the ARS question, such as case study details, that can be shown on the PowerPoint screen and then the actual question will be shown on the ARS screen at the appropriate time.

Once the question is brought on the screen, a timer will count down to show the audience the amount of time they have left to respond (typically 10 – 20 seconds). If this appears to not be enough time for the question to be read and participants to respond, appropriate adjustments will be made.

It is possible to ask questions "on-the-fly" - questions other than the ones entered into the ARS in advance of the conference. Simply mention from the podium that there is an additional question, and say what type of answer choices should be displayed. Then verbally state the question for the audience and the ARS operator will display a slide that says "Please respond now..." and lists the answer choices requested. The following answer choices are available (all are based on a 5-point Likert scale except YES/NO); YES/NO, AGREE...DISAGREE, EXCELLENT...POOR, EFFECTIVE...INEFFECTIVE, MUCH...LESS. There is also an option that lists the #'s 1 - 10 as answer choices, in which case the speaker will need to tell the audience which each number represents (e.g. "Please press #1 to choose diabetes, #2 for pneumonia, #3 for CVA", etc.). The default for the "on-the-fly" questions is YES/NO. The following is an example of how "on-the-fly" questions can be used:

SPEAKER: I see that I am running overtime and lunch is about to start. Mr. ARS Operator, let's poll the audience to see if I should continue. Please bring up the YES/NO answer choices

ARS OPERATOR: Certainly Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Audience, would you prefer that I continue on with my lecture or stop now so everyone can go to lunch? Please press 1 for YES and 2 for NO.

For the sake of consistency, please NUMBER all answer choices, do not use LETTERS. It is possible to have up to 10 answer choices, but it is recommended that questions be limited to 5 short answers. Anything more than that may cause the screen to appear cluttered and is harder to read.

Possibly the most important aspect of a successful presentation using the ARS is communication between the speaker and the ARS operator. Please make every effort to provide ARS questions as early as possible and at the very least have a phone conversation with the ARS operator. Ideally, a brief face-to-face meeting should be scheduled to discuss expectations, answer questions, and provide the speaker with a preview of how the ARS works.

The following tips are from OptionTechnologies®, the makers of the ARS JMC uses (OptionFinder®)

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. The best questions often don't have a right or wrong answer, but illustrate the diversity of opinion that relates to your forthcoming remarks.
2. Simple questions are best. Avoid confusing questions with multiple correct answers (e.g., a choice of 1 & 2 but not 3) and questions with double negatives. A few relevant answers are the best way to avoid an overly busy graph.
3. Questions with multiple, legitimate and controversial answer choices are best for engaging your audience in discussion.
4. A few questions effectively discussed are better than a lot that are glossed over. If you are new to OptionFinder, start with just a few questions.
5. Don't ask a question and then ignore the results. It's better not to ask than to offend your audience by not paying attention to their responses.
6. Good planning for a session should include anticipating the possible answers you might get to each of your questions, and the steps you will take in response to those answers to help ensure good audience interaction.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD QUESTIONS

Consider the following when planning and reviewing questions you develop for your presentation. Your questions should have these characteristics:

- **Brief.** In general, questions should be brief so they can be grasped quickly. Many groups have a mild sense of impatience. They don't like reading long questions on a screen or having long questions read to them. Usually, questions should be limited to 1-2 sentences, although they may be linked to a problem or case presented in advance.
- **Worthy.** The questions and their response choices should be regarded by the participants as "real," as worthy of their time and attention. If participants consider questions to be obvious, superficial, or unimportant, they may become restless, uninterested, or offended. Worse still, they may play with the answers rather than respond with what they really think.
- **Engaging/intriguing.** People like, and will give their attention to, questions that deal with subjects they consider important and/or interesting. The more that they want to know the correct answer to a question, or the opinions of their colleagues, the more seriously they will take the task and eagerly await the outcome.