



micro article
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The four types of coaching questions

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If questions are the tools of the coaching toolbox, which ones will you choose to be most effective in each situation?

With considered questions the thoughtful coach can encourage, question, reflect, guide, challenge and provoke deeper thinking for the coachee. This micro article will explore four types of questions commonly used by coaches and when they might be most effective.

Open questions

The staple of the coaches toolkit, open questions encourage discussion. Typically starting with phrases such as:

- What ...
- When ...
- Where ...
- Who ...
- How ...
- Tell me more ...

Open questions are particularly useful for engaging a coachee with generating ideas and thoughtful responses. They are also excellent for developing rapport and empathy between coach and coachee.

Closed questions

Although usually only eliciting a single word answer such as *yes* or *no*, used sparingly, closed questions can help clarify, challenge,

provide feedback and reflect back what a coachee is saying.

Socratic questioning

Socratic questions can be useful for challenging unhelpful thoughts. There are six foci of socratic questions. Here's a typical example of each:

- **Clarification** - Could you explain that?
- **Assumptions** - What does that mean?
- **Evidence** - How do you know that?
- **Perspective** - Is there another way of seeing this?
- **Consequences** - What would this imply?
- **Questioning the question** - What does this mean to you?

Scaling

This final category asks the coachee to rate on a scale, typically numerical, but which could also be more visual, such as emojis, where they would locate themselves in relation to a particular thought or action.

This can be particularly useful for clarifying the coachee's commitment to an action, or how important something is to them.