



Project Meetings – Ask Effective, Broad Questions

4-H project leaders fulfill a number of roles: organizer, planner, chaperone, and educator. In being an educator, project leaders facilitate learning experiences for their youth members. A critical component of this educator role is drawing out young people's ideas. Asking effective questions (or prompts) will help build their understanding and promote reasoning and critical thinking. Effective questions help to stimulate thinking and creativity. However, not all questions/prompts are created equal. There are **broad** questions/prompts and **focused** questions/prompts.

- **Broad Question/Prompt:** Elicits a variety of acceptable and generally unpredictable responses. Broad questions/prompts allow youth to make sense of and explore their own ideas, in their own terms, without restrictions, and only minimal guidance. Broad questions encourage youth to share various ideas during a discussion. Examples: What do you know about agriculture? Discuss your observations.
- **Focused Question/Prompt:** Elicits a particular, predictable response planned by the facilitator. Focused questions/prompts generally have a right and wrong response or a “yes” or “no” response. Examples: Name the parts of a goat. What is a pollinator?

We often default to focused questions/prompts that inquire about memorization and recall of information. Developing effective questions can be challenging, particularly during the middle of a 4-H project meeting, so plan out a handful of questions/prompts in advance.

Tips

- In general, ask more broad questions and fewer focused questions.
- Broad questions ask youth to discuss, interpret, explain, evaluate, compare, and share if or what if. Other broad questions ask youth to compare what worked and what did not work, ask if there are other ways it could work, and why they think it works.