

5.5 Question types

How can questions be categorised or sorted?

A child witness interviewer must have a sound knowledge of how questions are categorised to be able to form questions that will elicit the most complete and accurate information from the child. Research shows that an interviewer's questions affect both the quantity and quality of information gained.



Study the table showing some common categories of question types. Note that the table includes 'Verbatim statements' as a type of question.

OPEN ENDED INVITATIONS	FACILITATOR	DIRECT QUESTION FOCUSED	LEADING QUESTION OPTION-POSING	SUGGESTIVE QUESTION
<p>Designed to let the child provide details without any input from the interviewer.</p> <p>"Tell me more about that"</p> <p>"And then what happened"</p> <p>Types of open ended invitations:</p> <p>Time segmentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Tell me everything that happened from the time you got up today until the time you went to school" <p>Cued recall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "You said Uncle Tommy touched you. Tell me everything about that." 	<p>Verbatim statements of what the child previously mentioned</p> <p>Non-suggestive words to encourage the child to keep talking</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>"Uh-huh"</p> <p>"Okay"</p>	<p>Used to obtain additional details <u>already</u> mentioned by child utilizing the "who, what, where, when, how" questions.</p> <p>Note: not "why" (difficult concept for child to answer).</p> <p>Can be used <u>before</u> the break</p> <p>Sometimes necessary to obtain investigative information. Always pair with an open-ended invitation.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>"You mentioned you were at the mall. <u>Where</u> exactly were you?"</p> <p>"You said your classmate saw <u>What</u> was his/her name?"</p>	<p>Used to elicit information that has <u>not</u> been mentioned by the child.</p> <p>Asks child to confirm, reject or choose between possible responses.</p> <p>Try to avoid or use <u>after</u> the break</p> <p>Always pair with an open-ended invitation.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>"Did he touch you over or under the clothes?"</p> <p>"Do you remember?/Can you ..." questions</p> <p>Bestway to formulate: "Was it <u>A</u> or <u>B</u> or <u>something else</u>?"</p>	<p>Implies (suggests) a certain response is expected or implies details not mentioned by a child.</p> <p>Avoid using these questions, but if you must always follow by pairing with an open-ended invitation.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>"He had intercourse with you, didn't he?" (Implies they had intercourse.)</p> <p>"Who else was there when dad touched you?" (Implies someone else was there.)</p> <p>"Where else did he touch you?" (Implies touched somewhere else.)</p> <p>"What did he say?" (Implies he said something.)</p>

Why use different types of questions?

Different types of questions prompt access to different types of memory processes. We may question to prompt *recall* or *recognition* memory.

Questions to prompt recall	Questions to prompt recognition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended invitations • Interviewer invites person to tell everything they remember • Person provides what is significant to them • Greater accuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct questions (may be open ended or closed) • Interviewer provides "clue" as to what he/she wants person to tell about • Person provides response to interviewer's "clue"

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeletal sketch of event • Narrative-based response • More errors of omission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less accuracy • More specific details • Brief (one word or phrase) responses • More errors of commission |
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What is meant by "Spiral" questioning?

Question types range on a continuum of open to closed/direct. Spiral questioning refers to the types of questions the interviewer uses and their positioning on this continuum.

When you first meet the child and throughout the interview, whenever possible you should use open invitations to encourage the child to talk in free narratives. Open questions are likely to provide you detailed information without you having to ask direct questions (which are less reliable).

Look at the following example. The questions are listed from more open to closed (i.e. most to least desirable):

- Tell me everything that happened.
- Tell me everything that happened in the lounge.
- Tell me everything that happened on the couch.
- Tell me everything about him touching you.
- How did he touch you?
- What part of his body did he use to touch you?
- Was it his hand that he used to touch you?



(Note: The last question is a leading question and therefore inappropriate to use.)

