

Responding to Questions

SC Association of Counties | Institute of Government

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- Listen closely, answer only the question asked and bridge back to your response
- Bridging – phrasing to get back to your message
 - “Thank you for bringing that up, however, it’s also important to emphasize...”
 - “That is an important point, and it also speaks to a bigger issue which is...”
 - “That is one way to think about it. Another way is...”
 - “That is not my area of expertise, but I can tell you...”
 - “What’s most important here is that” Or “The key issue is...”
 - “It’s our policy not to discuss XYZ, but what I can tell you is...”
- Mirroring – repeating back the question. Helpful to provide context
 - “What color is the sky?”
 - “The sky is blue.”
- Verbal white space
 - **Why?**
 - Diffuses aggressive questions
 - Clears a speaker’s head
 - Slows down a conversation
 - Creates a “pregnant pause”
 - **How?**
 - Pause
 - Take a breath
 - Let your words sink in
- Keep in mind that words matter
 - Avoid using negatives, loaded words, unintended phrasing or personally deprecating statements.
 - *NO: We didn’t break the law. YES: We did everything by the letter of the law.*
 - *NO: People suggest that I don’t have the education to do the job. YES: I have 20+ years in the business.*
 - *NO: Law enforcement claims this office is responsible for the missing money. YES: Every dollar that runs through this office has been accounted for.*

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