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## A Note on Managing Questions

One tool many speakers neglect in managing discussion is quality listening. Listening means active and reflective listening as we discussed in class:

- Move in closer, looking at the questioner while they are talking, truly focused and hearing what they are saying.
- Avoid any internal chatter: the answer you intend to make, the fact that another person has a hand up--all the speaker's issues that become apparent when you are not talking.
- Allow yourself time to exhale, get centered and open to the questioner.
- Encourage them to feel comfortable asking a question with minimal non-verbal support.
- Then, wait until the very end of the question, including punctuation, before responding.

When the questioner has completed **all** of the question, acknowledge them by paraphrasing or summarizing what they said before you begin to answer. As you know, the paraphrase will make them feel that you have heard them, and it will help them clarify or add to their question if you missed anything. Reflecting the question will help you answer fully, and, since you have really listened, answer the right question. If there is an emotional charge or negative assumption underlying the question, the acknowledgement will help you defuse it. It will slow you down and give you time to think, enabling you to answer the way you want.

After you have reflected or restated the question, and as you begin an answer, remember to step back and include the whole audience in your answer. Your job during the Q & A is to keep all the audience interested and involved. Do not get into a one-on-one with one person; take eye contact out to all while answering. Avoid glancing back to the questioner or asking them if you have answered their question. Leave it up to them to ask further questions if they need to. Otherwise, they may turn the Q & A into a dialogue, dominating the discussion.