

# Asking Curious Questions Workshop

## Organizer Guide

This workshop, often referred to as the sequel to the **Skills for Listening Well Workshop**, introduces participants to curious question-asking as a way to move conversations beyond the surface and into deeper understanding. Rather than focusing on debate or persuasion, participants practice asking open-ended questions that invite reflection, help clarify experiences, and support meaningful dialogue.

Through guided practice, participants explore different kinds of questions and how they shape conversations. The process moves from questions that help surface what matters most to questions that open space for new possibilities, helping participants strengthen their ability to stay curious and engaged, even across differences.

## Advanced Planning

### Goals

- Practice asking curious questions that support reflection and understanding
- Recognize how different types of questions shape the direction of a conversation
- Build confidence in asking open-ended questions that go beyond yes-or-no responses
- Explore how curiosity can support connection and dialogue across differing perspectives
- Create a foundation for more thoughtful, effective conversations

### Steps

The first step is preparing workshop materials, including a slide deck or informational display introducing curious question-asking, the Asking Curious Questions handout (linked below), name tags, and the evaluation survey (linked below). These materials form the foundation of the workshop experience.

Next, arrange a comfortable room setup that supports both full-group discussion and small-group practice. Ideally, the space should accommodate participants working in triads, with enough distance between groups to allow for private conversation.

Print and display a Community Agreements poster (linked below) outlining shared expectations such as listening with care, using “I” statements, challenging ideas rather than people, and acknowledging assumptions. This helps establish a supportive practice space.

Develop an organizer script with timing for each segment of the 60-minute workshop: welcome (5 minutes), curious questioning practice (50 minutes), and closing (5 minutes). Example linked below. Include key talking points and clear transitions.

Prepare reflection prompts and clear instructions for practice sessions, where participants work in groups of three to explore both first-level questions that help clarify experiences and second-level questions that invite deeper reflection and possibility.

Test any digital materials in advance and prepare backup plans in case of technical issues. This workshop can be run without technology if needed.

Plan to take photos of the room setup and, with permission, participant engagement to document the program and support future promotion.

## **Marketing**

Promote the workshop as an opportunity to practice asking better questions and having more meaningful conversations, especially with people who hold different perspectives. Emphasize that this is a learning-based, low-pressure practice space rather than a lecture or debate.

This workshop is commonly offered as a sequel to the **Skills for Listening Well** workshop (formerly known as the Active Listening workshop). While participants do not need to attend that workshop first, this session builds naturally on listening skills by focusing on how curiosity and thoughtful questions shape dialogue.

Create descriptive materials that explain curious questioning in accessible language. Emphasize that the goal is not to steer conversations or arrive at solutions, but to stay open, reflective, and engaged. Avoid overly academic or technical terminology.

Target outreach to community groups interested in conversation, dialogue, civic participation, or relationship-building. Encourage staff or other leaders to personally invite participants who have expressed interest in community connection or thoughtful discussion.

Take photos during the workshop, with appropriate permissions, to document engagement and create visual resources for future programming.

## **Budgeting**

Printing: \$5–15 (handouts, name tags, evaluation forms)

Markers and supplies: \$5–10

Refreshments (optional): \$25–50

Organizer preparation time: 90 minutes

Room setup and cleanup: 30 minutes each

Tips to cut costs

- Offer digital handouts participants can access on personal devices
- Skip refreshments or invite donations
- Repurpose existing supplies

## **Day-of-event**

Arrive 30 minutes before the workshop to set up the room, arrange seating for small-group discussions, and create a welcoming atmosphere. Optional soft background music or One Small Step clips can help set the tone as participants arrive.

Set up a name tag station with markers and prepare handouts at each seat or at a central distribution point. Display the Community Agreements poster prominently.

Test any technical equipment one final time.

Greet participants as they arrive and direct them to name tags and seating. Take photos of the setup and, with permission, the workshop in progress.

## **Program Execution**

Begin with a warm welcome and brief introductions (5 minutes). Organizers introduce themselves and invite participants to share their names and what brought them to the session.

Review the session goals and Community Agreements (linked below), emphasizing that this is a practice space where curiosity, experimentation, and imperfection are expected.

Introduce the concept of curious question asking using the handout (5 minutes). Explain that different types of questions invite different kinds of responses, and briefly review the question categories included in the guide.

Guide participants through a short reflection prompt (3 minutes):

“Think of a recent conversation that felt challenging or stuck. Write down what was said and how you responded.”

Facilitate the curious questioning practice (30 minutes) by groups of three. One participant shares their situation (2 minutes), the others ask first-level questions (4 minutes), then second-level questions (4 minutes). Rotate roles so each participant has a chance to share and ask questions.

Lead a group debrief (15 minutes) exploring how it felt to ask and answer different kinds of questions, what participants noticed about their own habits, and how curiosity changed the conversation.

Close with final reflections and next steps (5 minutes). Distribute and collect evaluation surveys and bookmarks to sign up for a One Small Step conversation (linked below). Invite participants to share one takeaway.

## **Advice**

Focus on practice over theory. While the framework is helpful, most learning happens through doing.

Talk about how these skills can feel awkward at first. Reassure participants that discomfort is normal when trying new conversation habits.

Emphasize that curious question-asking is not about steering conversations or leading someone toward a conclusion. It is about openness and genuine interest.

Keep time carefully during group of three practice so everyone has equal opportunity to participate.

Model curiosity as an organizer. How you ask questions sets the tone for the room.

Pay attention to the physical space. Participants need enough privacy to speak honestly while still feeling connected to the larger group.

Remind participants that these skills develop over time and encourage continued practice beyond the workshop.

## **Solo Activity Adaptation**

Materials

- Asking Curious Questions handout
- Blank paper for reflection
- Community Agreements handout (linked below)

- Recorded introduction to curious question-asking concepts

#### Activity Flow

- Read or listen to the introduction
- Reflect on a recent challenging conversation
- Practice writing different types of curious questions
- Try one question of each type in a future conversation
- Return to the station to reflect on what happened

#### Support and Connection

- Offer optional follow-up discussion opportunities
- Include bookmarks to sign up for a One Small Step conversation (linked below)
- Invite participants to future workshops
- Document station use with photos, where appropriate