



“Reasoning” questions

It is said that **Socratic** questions originated from Socrates and his teachings. They’re known by many names including “Guided” or “Discovery” questions. We prefer “**Reasoning**” questions as they make people literally use reasoning to find out the answer.

The idea is to help the person/people answer a question that will assist their understanding and the perspective of others instead of just their own. It is also far more powerful to have someone come up with the answer themselves, rather than be told it or have it explained.

There are 2 key elements to a Reasoning question which are:

- 1.1 Clues:** To add hints, clues, or tips to nudge the person in the right direction
- 1.2 Softening:** A phrase built into the question giving the person permission to be wrong. Examples could include, how do you “**think**” it works, why do you “**reckon**” we do it that way, what “**could**” the reason be for this? Instead of *how, why or what?*

Let’s look at these two versions of the same question and compare the two.

How **are** we going to fix this? (Need the right answer = **pressure**).

How do you **think** we could fix this or what thoughts have you got on how to approach this? (More asking opinion = far less pressure).

First let’s look at the clue. Remember, the clue would be something to help them think along the right track. See examples below show the clues in **bold green italics**:

- 2.1 Given ***we need to finish by 4 o’clock*** and we are currently ***spending a lot of time chatting about other things***, what do you think we should do?
- 2.2 I know we have had to cancel your move into your new home, how do you reckon you might have felt if you’d got there and ***there was no water for anything for a week?***
- 2.3 Looking at the screen that’s appeared now, and considering we’re trying to ***insert something into our document***, which of ***the menus at the top of the screen*** do you think we should click on?
- 2.4 I can understand the reasoning behind your behaviour, but given ***your colleagues are also maxed out and had to cover your work too***, how do you think they may feel about that, especially ***given your decision to not come in?***

Now let’s look at the “**Softening**”. Remember, it’s a way of almost asking for their opinion rather than the “right” answer. This lets them unconsciously relax and not feel so under pressure or threatened. Let’s look at the same sentences above with the “**Softening**” now in **bold orange** and the “**Clues**”, as above, in **bold green italics**:

- 3.1 Given that ***we need to finish by 4 o’clock*** and we are currently ***spending a lot of time chatting about other things***, what **do you think** we should do?
- 3.2 Whilst I agree we have had to cancel your move into your new home, how **do you reckon** you might have felt if you’d got there and there was ***no water for anything for a week?***
- 3.3 Looking at the screen that’s appeared now, and considering we’re trying to ***insert something into our document***, which of the menus at the top of the screen **do you think** we should click on?
- 3.4 I can understand the reasoning behind your behaviour, but given ***your colleagues are also maxed out and had to cover your work too***, how **might they** feel about that, especially ***given your decision to not come in?***

If you have any questions or want to Zoom in with a few colleagues, just let me know.