

## OVERVIEW

Students often have questions about topics related to sexual health that can be uncomfortable to ask in other settings. These questions are important and valid, and should be treated as an opportunity to enhance the learning in a non-judgemental way. When students ask questions out loud in class, it is important to not stigmatize the student or allow peers to make comments about or judge the question. This allows students to feel safe and validated, which enables them to learn developmentally appropriate, medically accurate information in a secure environment.

The question box is a teaching strategy that can be used to allow students an opportunity to ask questions anonymously. The main objective is to raise the level of comfort and communication for students during instruction. This teaching strategy affords teachers an excellent opportunity to assess student knowledge, retention of important facts, and the need for reteaching.

### Warning

Not all questions are appropriate for all grade levels! You may **ONLY** answer questions that fit into the scope of the vocabulary and objectives for the grade level in which it is being asked. This means that a question can potentially be answered differently in each grade, depending on the objectives.

## RESOURCES

### Question Box Guidelines

#### Guidelines for Answering Questions

- Not all questions can/should be answered. The objectives and content of the lessons are your guides for determining whether a question can be answered. If a topic is not addressed in the objectives or lesson content, it should not be addressed in the classroom.

- All questions should be addressed. If a question cannot be answered because it is outside of the scope of the objectives, direct students to a source who could answer the question. (“If I didn’t answer your question, who can you go to for more information?”)
- Give yourself time to respond. Build time for this into your Puberty Ed lesson planning.

## Resources

### [Guidelines for Answering Student Questions](#)



### [Question Box Strategy](#)



### Sexual Health Tips for Answering Questions



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## The SOY Method

### The SOY Method

Feeling stuck on a particularly challenging question? Try the SOY Method!

This method allows you to provide information about differing opinions and viewpoints while still encouraging students to make the best decisions for themselves and their families/cultures.

S - Some people feel/believe/think...

O - Other people feel/believe/think...

Y - You and your family need to decide what is best for you!

### SOY Method Example

Question: "Should I use pads or tampons?"

S - Some people use tampons or menstrual cups which are inserted into the vagina to collect blood during menstruation

O - Other people use pads or special underwear that collect blood outside of the body.

Y - You should talk to a trusted adult about what's right for you.

### Important Tip: Protecting Anonymity

Although students should not feel obligated to write their names when asking questions in the question box, it is important to have them indicate their class period! This allows you to answer questions that are grade-level appropriate only. Also, if you receive a question that requires important follow-up (something that is a red flag for abuse or risky behaviors), you can narrow down the pool of candidates who could have written the question.

#### Resources

##### [Question Box Strategy](#)

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##### [Guidelines for Answering Student Questions](#)

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##### [For The Question Box \(blank\) - Used during face-to-face learning](#)

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##### [Question Box Sample Questions](#)

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#### Common Questions

- What is sexual activity/sexual intercourse/sex?
  - Each of these terms can mean different things to different people. Some people might think sexual activity means any sexual contact like kissing, touching over or under clothing, above or below the waist. Others think sexual activity refers only to sexual intercourse, or certain types of genital to genital contact.
  - Explain how you will be using the term in class. For example, "In this class, when we are talking about sex, we are talking about any contact between one person's genitals and another person's body."
  - Anal sex, oral sex and vaginal sex are all types of sex.
- What is abstinence?

- Abstinence means choosing not to do something. In these lessons, abstinence means choosing not to have sex. This includes not engaging in:
  - direct touching of a partner's genitals
  - vaginal sex (penis to vagina)
  - anal sex (penis to anus)
  - oral sex (mouth to penis, anus or vulva/vagina)
- Abstinence is often referred to as being 100% safe; meaning that there is no risk of pregnancy and no or low risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This is only true if all of the activities in the definition above are avoided.
- Most teens choose abstinence.
- What is virginity?
  - Virginity means different things to different people. Virginity is a cultural idea, not a biological fact, so the meaning can change from person to person and over time. Many people define it as not having chosen to be sexually active with another person yet.
- If you have already had sex, can you still be abstinent?
  - Yes. A person who has had sex in the past, who chooses not to be sexually active, is abstinent. The choice to be abstinent can be made at any time, regardless of past experience.
  - Sometimes people use someone's sexual history to pressure them to have sex again. This is not fair and could be considered coercion or bullying.

## QUICK CHECK


### Quick Check

ALL questions asked by students during the Sexual Health unit should be answered fully.

- ☐ True
- ☒ False



Correct! Only answer questions that are covered in the lessons and objectives. For questions about topics that are NOT addressed in the lessons and objectives, students should be directed to talk to another trusted adult in their life.

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