



Guidelines for Question Setters: March 2015

Use the DPQL approved template; **do not change the font size** of the questions. If you run out of a page before completing the round, either:

- a) shorten the question/answer to use fewer lines, or
- b) move the answer column boundary for the round to give more/less/optimum space, or
- c) reduce (but not delete) the size of the line break (between sets in the team questions)

Use up-to-date reference books and verify answers in a second **reputable** source

Individual questions should be more gettable (easier) than the team questions

Avoid giving a theme to a round of individual questions unless the theme results in a round of questions on a variety of topics e.g. a Blockbuster approach or answers based on colours. If you use a legitimate theme then explain it in the heading, perhaps giving an example, and if it can be done concisely, alluding to the theme in each question

A 'How many' question should have a specific answer, unless there is a range of acceptable answers, the extent of which should be made clear

e.g. 'more than' or 'none' should not be expected as answers

Ask questions with single not multiple answers unless those answers are intrinsically linked

e.g. (Eric) Morecambe and (Ernie) Wise

Do not ask a question with a limited number of answers. It makes the throwback too obvious

e.g. Which colour makes the first move in chess?

Avoid questions with more than one answer unless all acceptable answers are listed

e.g. Which classification system is used in libraries? (Dewey is not the only one.)

Answers should be clear, unique and unambiguous. If alternative answers are possible, these must be clearly shown e.g. **ethyl alcohol** or **ethanol**

Make clear which portion of the answer is essential – by the use of **bold type**

e.g. President George **Washington** or (President George) **Washington**

(Additional information may be given in *italic type*)

Try to avoid questions that are obviously lifted from lists

e.g. What is the fourth highest mountain in the Himalayas?

Allow for cases in which the answer might change as a result of events that occur before the questions are used

e.g. Ask 'Who is/was the Home Secretary **on a given date?**'

In team questions, avoid a narrowness of subject

e.g. do not set three questions on, say, a specific book or TV programme

In team rounds, within each question trio, there should be a range of difficulties.

e.g. there might be a question judged accessible to most teams and another not immediately familiar but encouraging teamwork, reasoning or plausible guesswork

For team rounds 2 and 6, **do not use cryptic titles** for the trios of questions

Questions must not be too esoteric (or narrow – see above) e.g. scientific questions must not be too technical and sport/music/film questions should not be too obscure

Spelling questions should be avoided in the team rounds

Since questions in individual and team rounds are picked at random, parity is not essential, but a significant variation in difficulty between questions or trios within any given round should be avoided.

Please note that the aggregate and average scores of matches are monitored and the League reserves the right to cancel the arrangement with the question setter if the questions are not of suitable standard. A typical aggregate score of 120 over all the divisions would normally be considered ideal

A few paragraphs from 'Brain Men' by Marcus Berkman (pub. Little, Brown & Company) to give the Question Setter food for thought

There are no real rules about setting quiz questions but you should bear certain things in mind.

Accessibility: *does the question fall within reasonable bounds of people's knowledge?*

Comprehensibility: *does it make sense?*

Variety: *have there been too many questions about 1960s' pop music for one week (or a lifetime)?*

Humility: *are you there to help people score points, or to score points off them? And perhaps most important of all,*

Gettability: *is anyone going to get this right? If not, why ask it at all?*

Questions which require precise numerical answers should be used sparingly and with care. For instance, it's fine to ask in which centuries the Hundred Years' War was fought, as there are only a limited number of possible answers. But it's really not on to ask how many days there are in a year on the planet Pluto and expect anyone to get it right. Even if you gave a point for the team who were within, say 10 per cent of the right answer, people would think, well, so what!

Good questions bring smiles to faces or make people bang their heads against walls because they really should have got it. Bad questions, by contrast, merely induce a dull ache of despair.

Bad questions devolve into three basic types, the Dull, the Stupid and the Wrong:

*The **Dull** are self-explanatory: the questions you have heard a thousand times before and probably still don't know the answers to.*

***Stupid** questions usually only exist to show everyone how clever the question setter is.*

***Wrong** questions speak for themselves – do your research!*