Audience response systems (ARS) are wireless personal response systems that allow participants at meetings and trainings to instantly and anonymously provide feedback, answer questions and vote in response to questions posed. The data is immediately available to both teacher and participants.

**What equipment is needed?**

There are a number of systems available. They all incorporate a few key elements:

- A response device, often called a clicker
- A response receiver (generally, a radio frequency USB device)
- Polling software installed on your computer
- A presentation that incorporates the questions to be asked (for example, PowerPoint)

**How do the systems capture data?**

Responses from the clickers are collected real-time using computer software provided by the manufacturer. Your computer must have the software pre-loaded, and you must activate a data collection session using the software in order for the system to work. There are settings you can use to identify the respondent (or maintain anonymity), vary the time allowed for responding to questions or changing answers, repeating a question and so forth. The results can then be displayed onscreen for participants to see, or you can postpone viewing the results. When the session is completed, it can be saved to the computer for later analysis by Excel or other spreadsheets. A variety of outputs are provided, including summaries, charts and individual responses identified by clicker ID number. This allows you to track all responses by an individual without breaking confidentiality.

**What kinds of questions can you ask?**

You’re limited only by your imagination. Some typical types of questions include:

- Audience demographics
- Audience background, beliefs and interests
- Knowledge before and after the class
- Understanding of concepts
- Application of ideas
- Satisfaction with the class or other events

**Tips for Using Audience Response Systems**

- Research different systems before you purchase one. Some are easier to use than others, and prices vary.
- Try out your presentation with the equipment in advance to make sure everything is working properly.
- Keep questions simple and clearly written so participants can read and respond quickly.
- Limit responses to five or less so participants don’t get bogged down reading them.
- Start with a few questions that help you understand the audience, and allow the audience to get comfortable using the devices.
- Don’t make questions too easy. Focus on key points, reasoning and application of knowledge.
- To avoid participant burnout, don’t overload your presentation with too many questions.
Sample Questions—4-H Camper Debriefing

Now that I have participated in 4-H camp, I am:

- More likely to get along with people who are different from me
- More likely to make my own decisions rather than go along with what others are doing
- More likely to help others
- More likely to practice healthy habits
- Able to settle disagreements in ways that aren’t hurtful to others

Response categories:
1. None of the time
2. Some of the time
3. Neutral
4. Almost all of the time
5. Every time

Questions provided by S. Chivilicek, UNCE

Why use audience response devices?

These systems provide a simple way to capture a lot of information from an audience in a readily usable form. Beyond data capture, however, there are additional benefits:

- Using clickers breaks up the presentation and keeps participants engaged.
- Instructors have the opportunity to assess and address preconceptions.
- All participants have an opportunity to weigh in on an issue or question.
- By maintaining anonymity, the likelihood of honest responses increases.
- The instructor benefits from the instant feedback on participant learning (or failure to understand) so that issues can be addressed immediately.
- The format promotes participant discussion. For example, participants can be asked to persuade their fellow students that their answer is correct, followed by re-polling.

Examples from a Pesticide Safety Training—Before and After the Class

Question: Adsorption of a pesticide refers to?
(Correct answer is “How strongly it sticks to soil particles.”)

References


