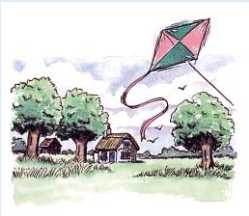




Questioning Skills for Scrutiny

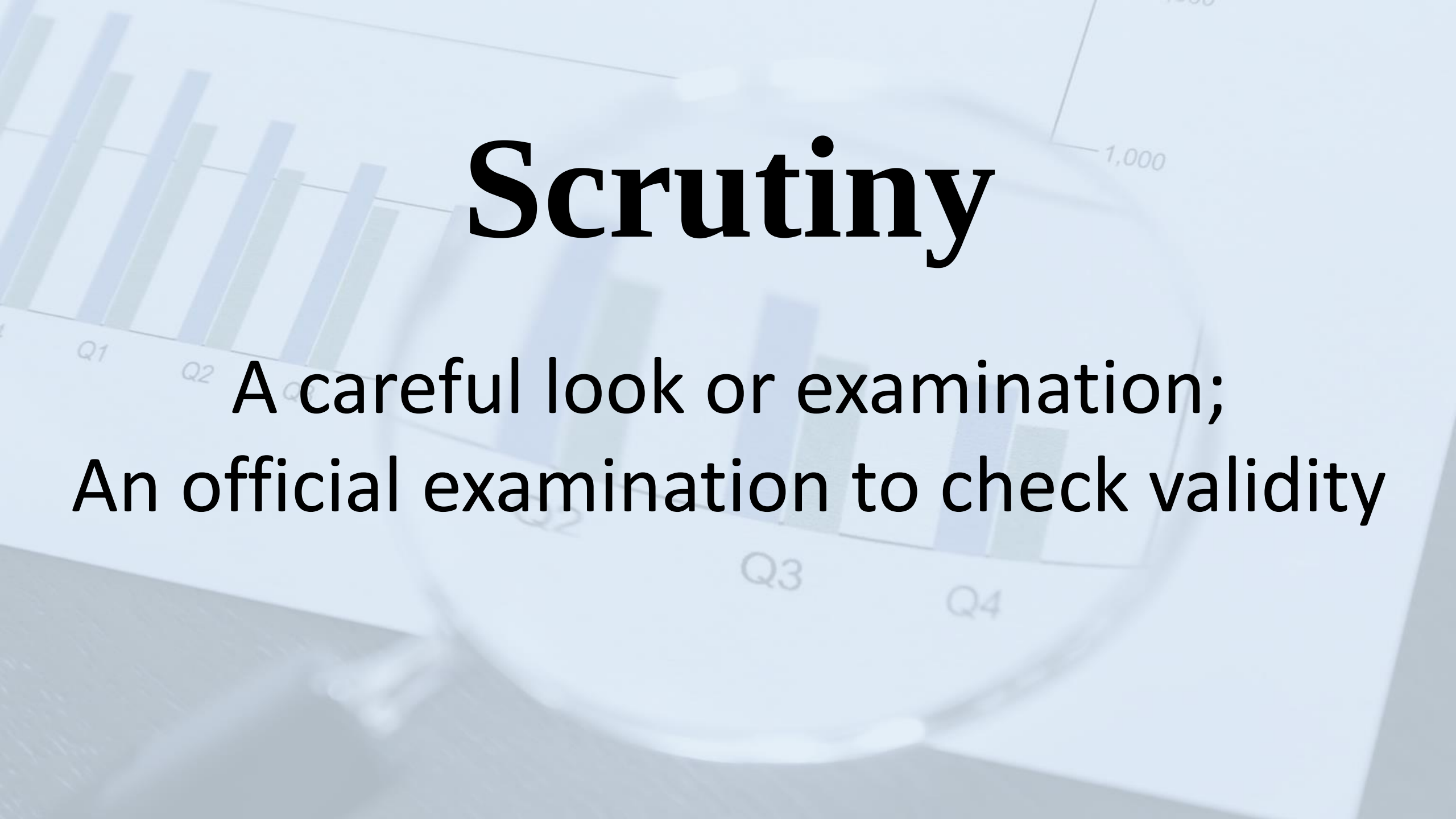
Miranda Smythe
The Baikie-Wood Consultancy Ltd



Programme Overview

- A brief introduction to scrutiny
- Preparing to ask questions
- Good practice questions
- Question types to avoid
- Probing techniques
- Active listening.



The background of the slide features a light blue, semi-transparent image. It depicts a magnifying glass with a silver handle and rim, positioned over a bar chart. The chart has four groups of bars labeled Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4. Each group contains two bars, one blue and one green. A horizontal line on the chart is labeled '1,000'. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, suggesting a focus on analysis and scrutiny.

Scrutiny

A careful look or examination;
An official examination to check validity

Purpose of Scrutiny

Purpose of Scrutiny



Influence the policies and decisions made by the Council

Purpose of Scrutiny



Influence the policies and decisions made by the Council



To gather evidence on issues which affect local people

Purpose of Scrutiny



Influence the policies and decisions made by the Council



To gather evidence on issues which affect local people



To make recommendations

Effective Scrutiny

- Being a “critical friend”
- Identify where decisions could be improved
- An opportunity to improve the organisation’s performance
- Positive changes rather than the allocation of blame
- To prevent mistakes from being repeated.



“Those who do not
learn history are
doomed to repeat it.”

—George Santayana



Planning for Scrutiny

How do you decide what questions to ask?



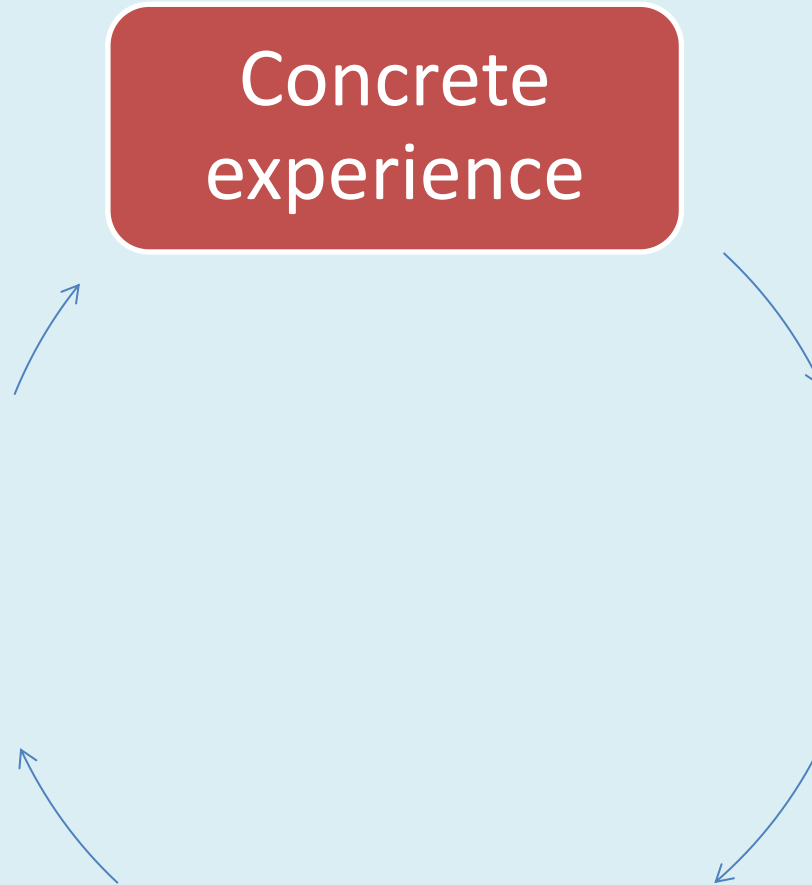


Planning your questions

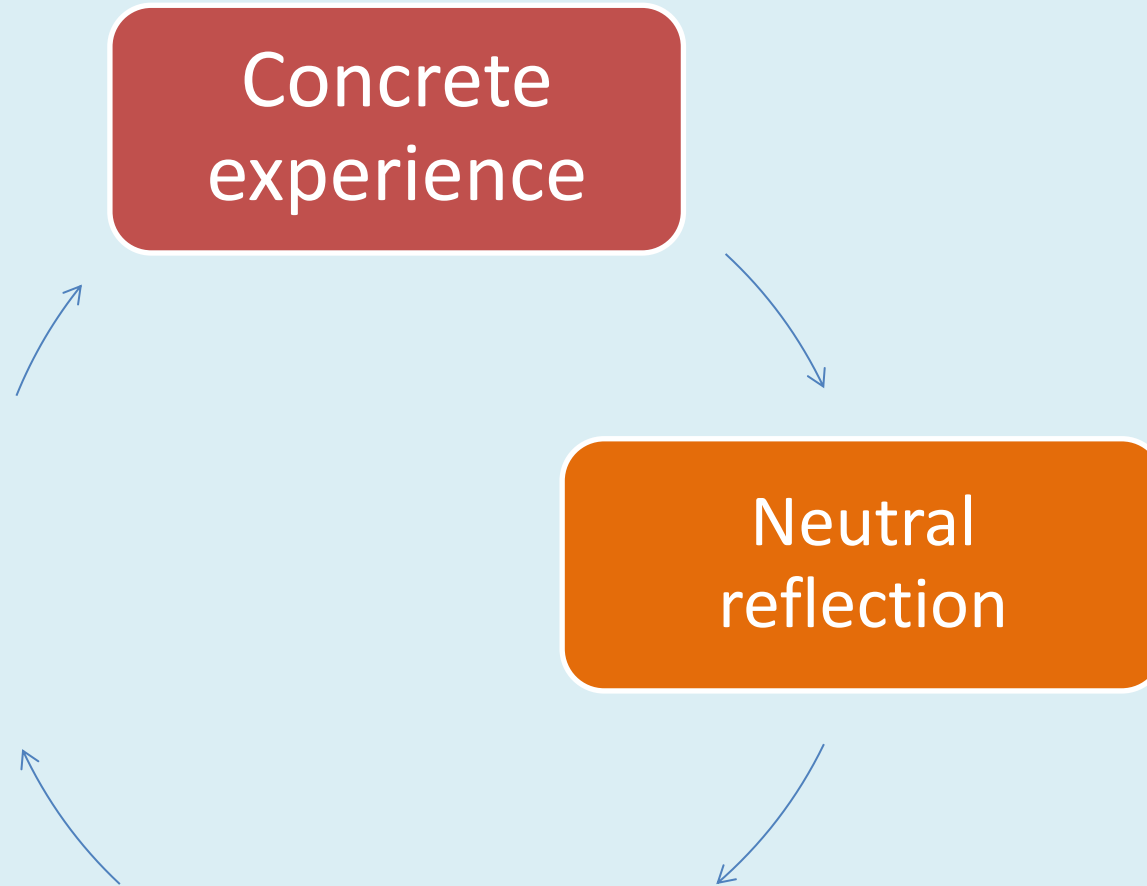
- Skim the report first
- Then go back and read it carefully
- Look for gaps in information
- Contradictory facts
- Points for clarification
- Instead of “what questions should I ask?”
- Focus on “what do I need to know?”
- Then plan what type of question to ask.

Kolb's Natural Learning Cycle

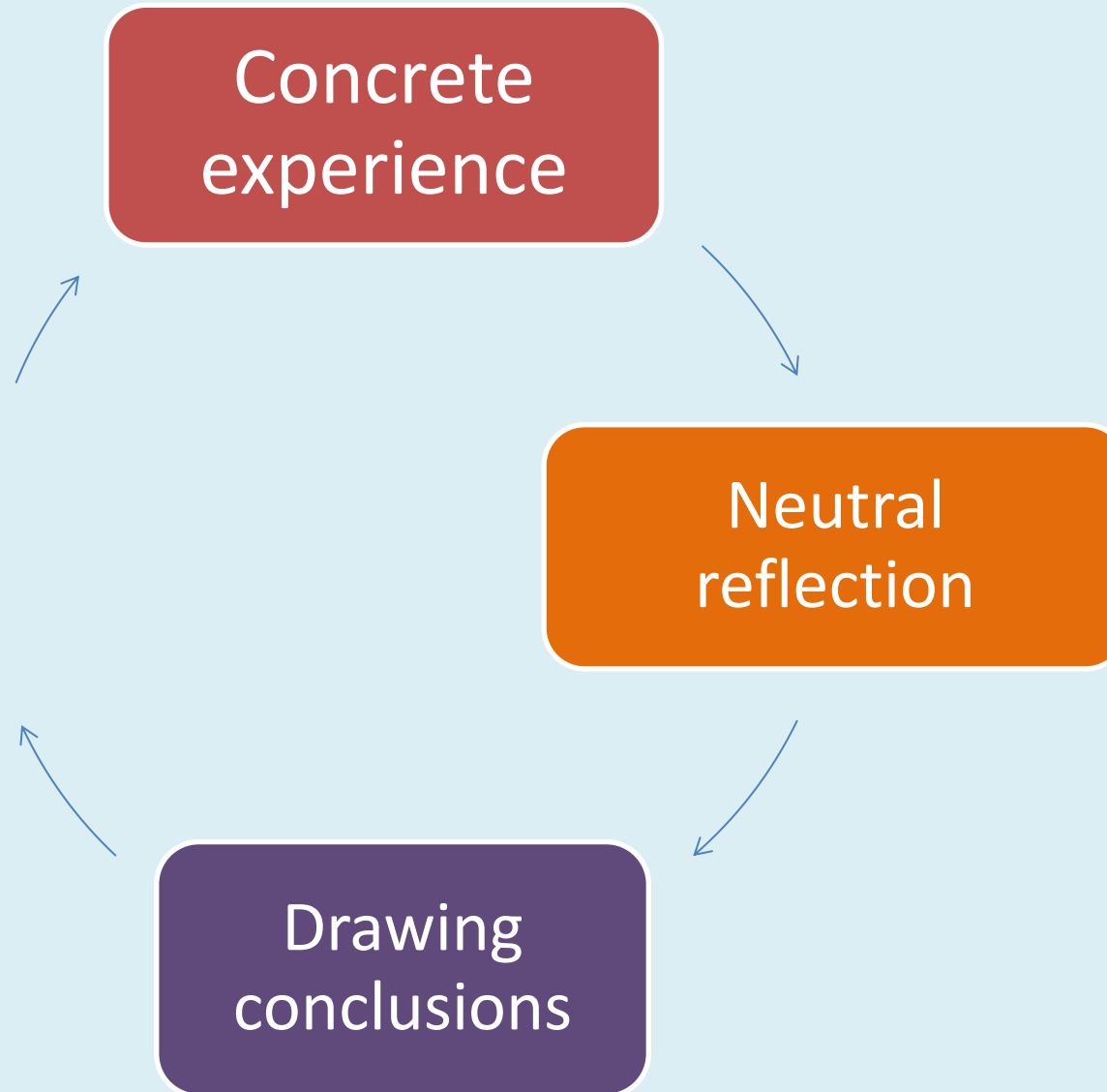
Kolb's Natural Learning Cycle



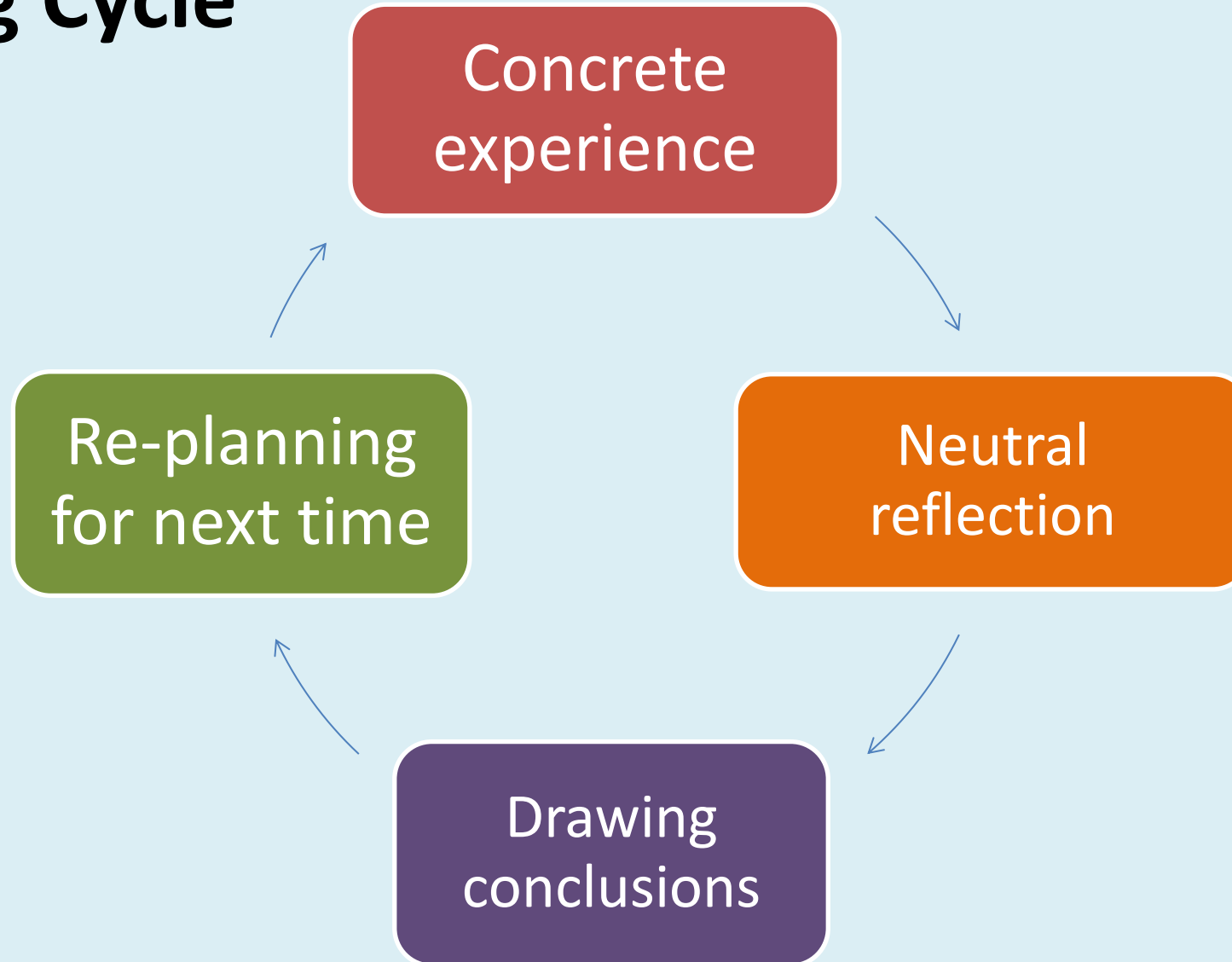
Kolb's Natural Learning Cycle



Kolb's Natural Learning Cycle



Kolb's Natural Learning Cycle



Using Questions

Using Questions

Good practice questions

Using Questions

Good practice questions

Poor practice questions

Using Questions

Good practice questions

- Open
- Closed
- Hypothetical
- Critical incident
- Pre-supposition

Poor practice questions

Using Questions

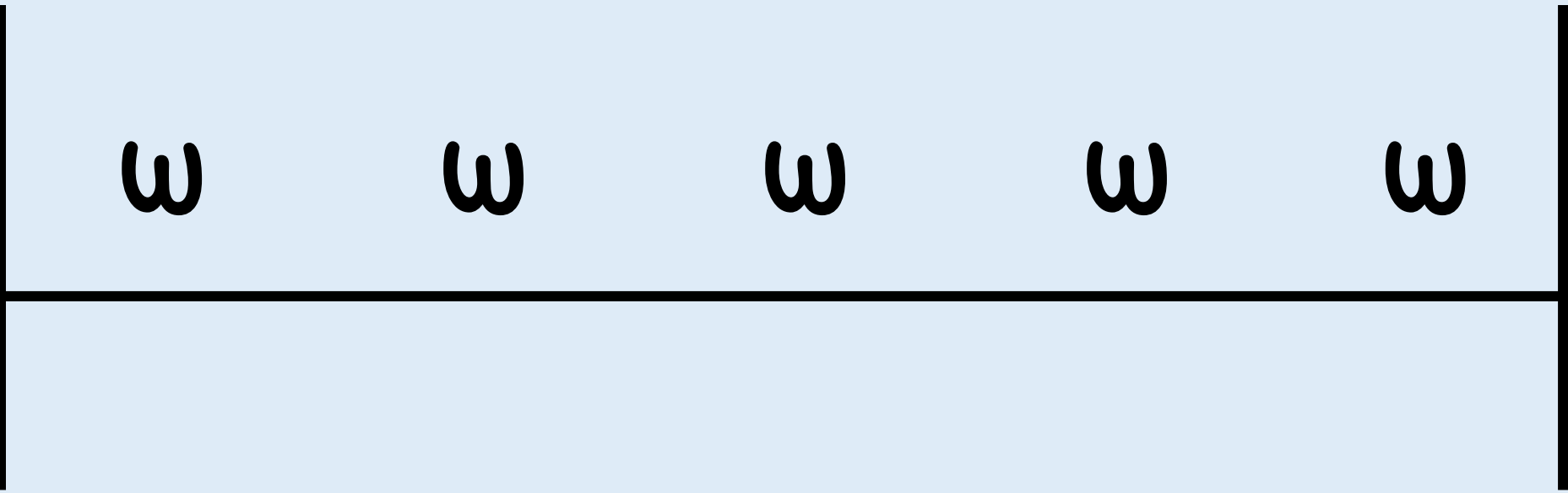
Good practice questions

- Open
- Closed
- Hypothetical
- Critical incident
- Pre-supposition

Poor practice questions

- Negative leading
- Positive leading
- Terry Wogan's
- Rhetorical
- Double bind
- Confirmation bias

Five Bottoms on a Bed



A diagram of a bed represented by a horizontal line with two vertical endposts. Five wavy lines, resembling the Greek letter omega (ω), are placed above the horizontal line, evenly spaced between the endposts.

ω

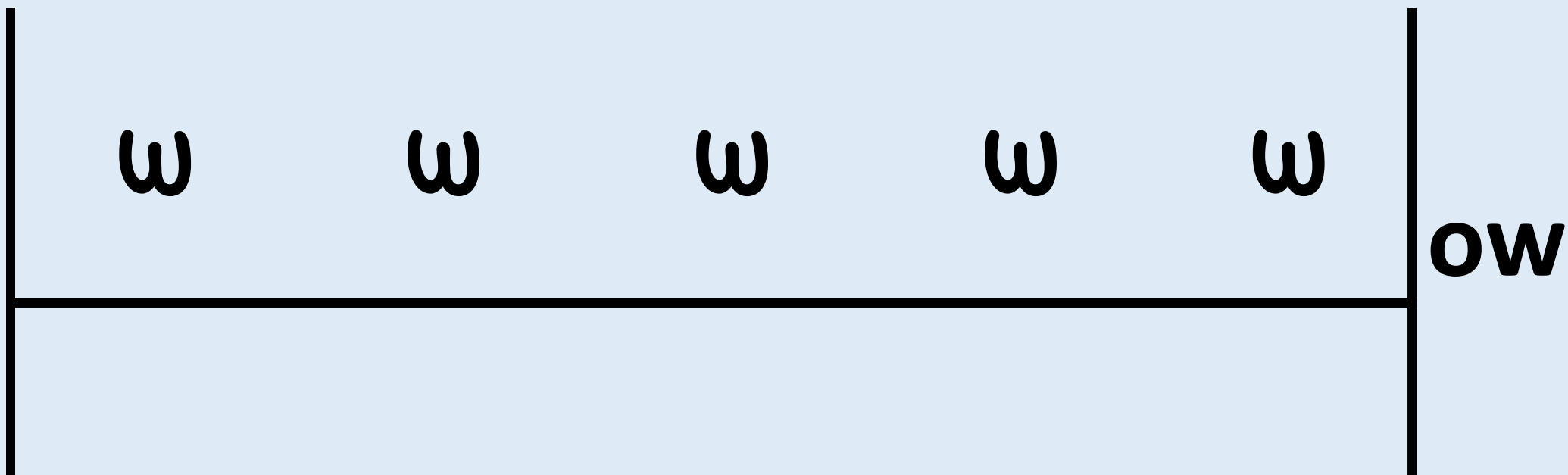
ω

ω

ω

ω

Five Bottoms on a Bed



Five Bottoms on a Bed

ω

ω

ω

ω

ω

ow

What

Where

When

Who

Why

Five Bottoms on a Bed

W

W

W

W

W

ow

What

Where

When

Who

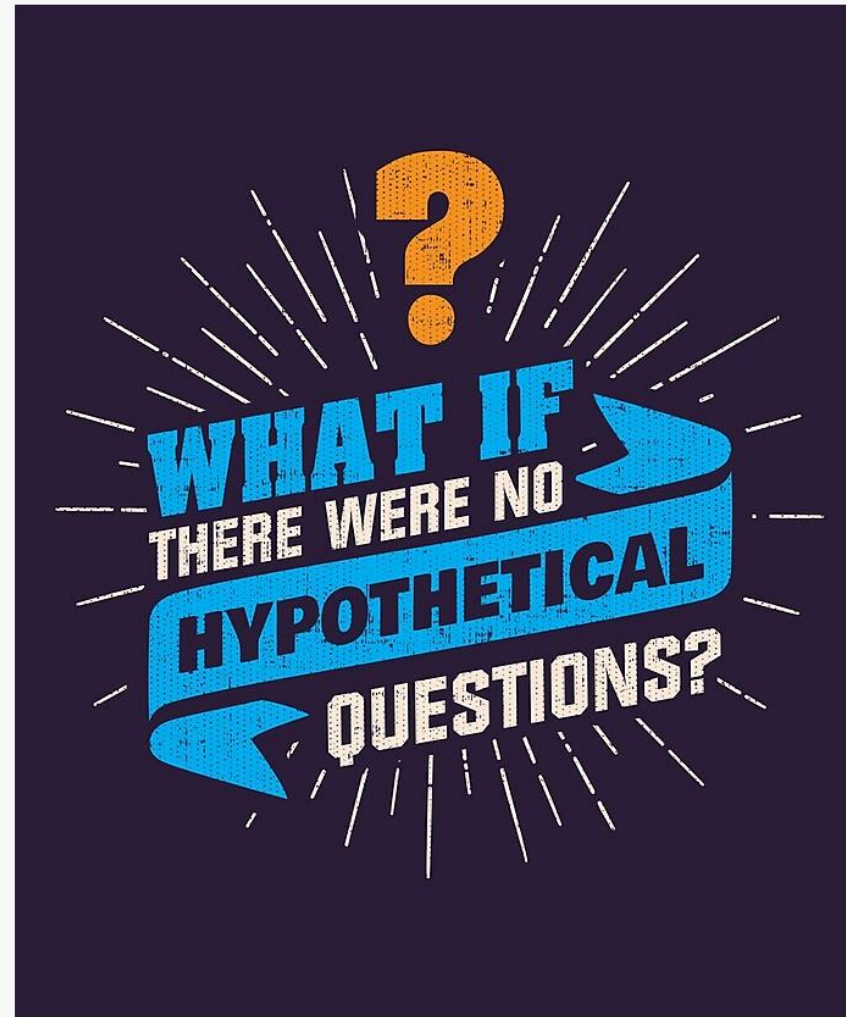
~~Why~~

Closed Questions



- Will you?
- Can you?
- Do you?
- Have you?

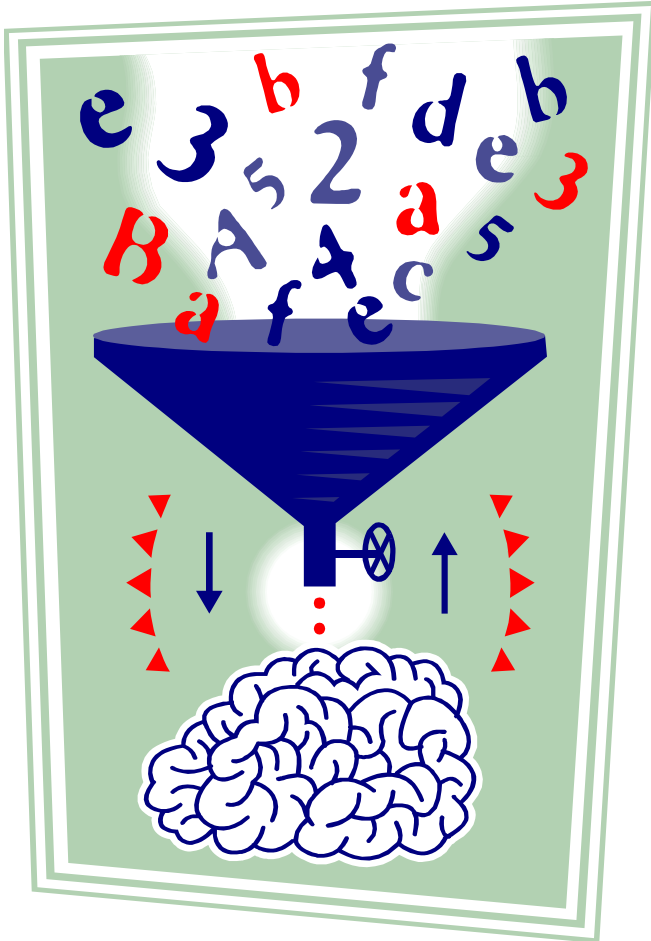






Hypothetical Questions

- What would you have done if the consultation had....?
- What would the process be if....?
- If you repeated the activity, what would you do differently?



Critical Incident Questions

- Tell me about...
- Talk me through...
- Describe to me...
- Explain to me...
- Give me an example...

Instead of....



Is there anything else
you can tell us about?



Try a pre-supposition...

- What else do we need to be aware of?
- What else can you tell us about?



Poor Practice Questions

- Negative leading:
- Positive leading:
- Terry Wogan:
- Rhetorical:
- Double bind:
- Confirmation bias.

Personal Activity

- Look around you
- Count up how many **red** items you can see in your room
- How many red items did you count?
- As you were doing this, how many **blue** items did you count?
- That's confirmation bias!



Poor Practice Questions

- Negative leading: “you didn’t think to...”
- Positive leading: “so you were happy with...”
- Terry Wogan: long, multiple, rambling
- Rhetorical: not requiring an answer
- Double bind: damned if you do...
- Confirmation bias.

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/video/2022/mar/24/po-ferries-boss-grilled-over-mass-sackings-commons-committee-mps-video>



Scrutiny activity

Scrutiny Activity

Over the last three years, rough sleeping within your council's area has increased by over 35%.

Your panel is scrutinising the way the council and its partners engage with people who are homeless, with the aim of exploring ways that the council can reduce the number of people who are sleeping rough.

Scrutiny Activity

Your first witness is the Council's Head of Housing and Community, whose role includes homelessness strategy.

What questions would you ask which would help you to gain an understanding of local issues?

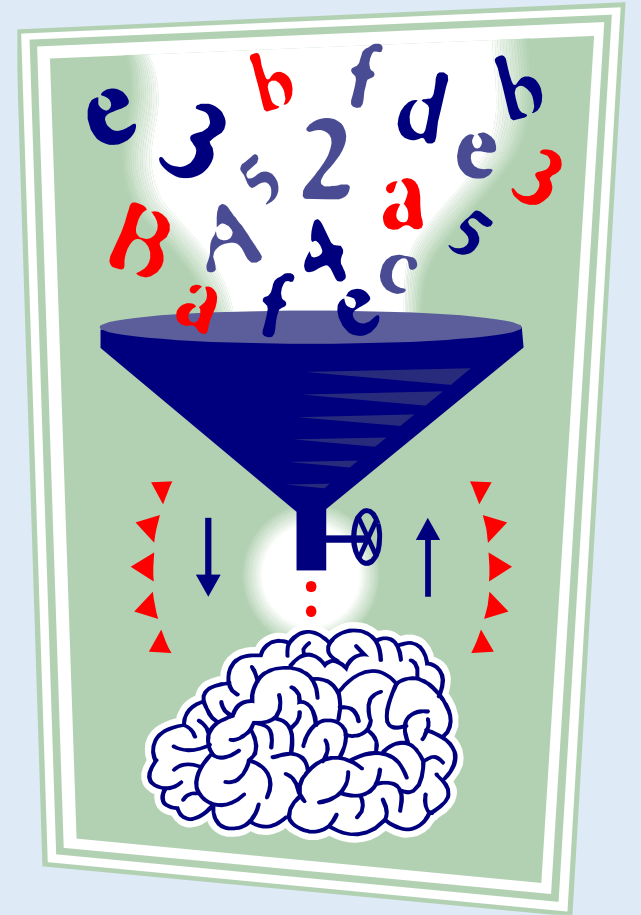
Asking Questions

- “What do I need to know” rather than “what question do I ask”
- Only ask a question if it’s relevant
- Or is likely to produce new information
- Avoid long preambles
- Keep your question short
- Manage your tonality
- Probe: ask supplementary questions.



Probing and QAC-QAC

- Start with a broad **q**uestion
- Listen to the **a**nswer
- **C**omment on what has been said
- Link to your next **q**uestion
- Listen to the **a**nswer
- **C**omment on what has been said...



Questioning tips

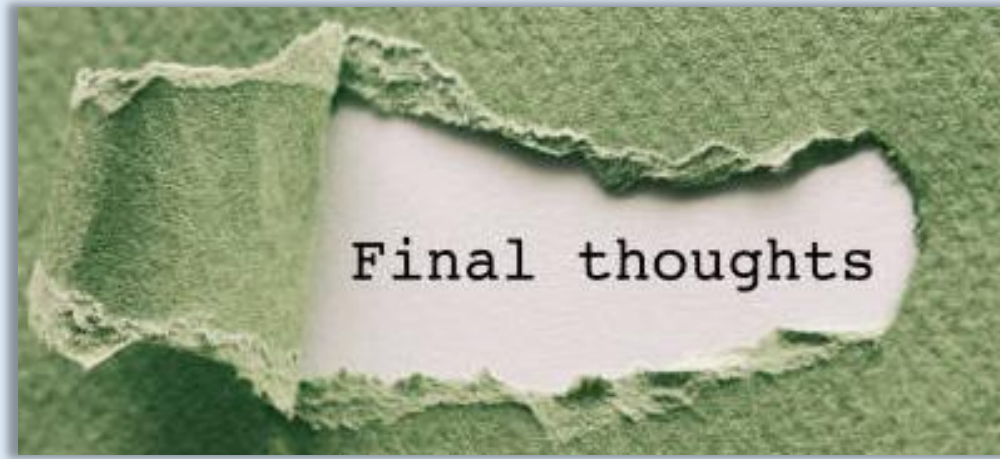
- Lift your voice at the end of your question
- Allow time for the person to respond
- If no response, reframe your question
- Should you need to, interrupt to re-direct
- Listen
- Show that you are listening.



Listening signals

- Facial expression and body language
- Head on one side
- Nodding
- Leaning forward
- Making eye contact
- Regulators and listening noises
- Taking notes.





- Quality questions invite quality answers
- Start safe: you can work your way around to trickier areas later
- Probe: if you don't, you will bounce off the surface
- Forget your next question
- If you really listen, your probing question will become clear
- When you've concluded, remember to say "thank you".

Programme Review

- A brief introduction to scrutiny
- Preparing to ask questions
- Good practice questions
- Question types to avoid
- Probing techniques
- Active listening.



