

10 Coaching Questions for Managers

Help employees think, choose, and take ownership.

Use one or two questions at a time. Listen to the answer, check your understanding, and give clear guidance when it is needed. Coaching is a conversation, not an interrogation.

1. What outcome are you trying to achieve?

Use when the goal is unclear. Separate the desired result from a preferred solution.

2. What is happening, and what have you observed?

Use to establish facts. Ask for examples before drawing conclusions.

3. What have you already tried?

Use before offering advice. Learn what worked, what did not, and why.

4. What options do you see?

Use when someone feels stuck. Allow time to think before filling the silence.

5. What are the advantages and risks of each option?

Use to compare choices, including effects on other people.

6. What information or support would help?

Use to identify missing resources, authority, training, or context.

7. What part of this is within your control?

Use to focus effort without dismissing real constraints.

8. What do you think is the best next step?

Use to invite ownership. Clarify any non-negotiable requirements.

9. How will you know you are making progress?

Use to agree on an observable sign of improvement.

10. When should we check in again?

Use to establish follow-through and a point to ask for help.

Put it into practice

A short coaching conversation

Employee: "I am behind on this project and do not know where to start."

Manager: "Which result is most urgent, and what is blocking it?"

Employee: "I am waiting for approval on the scope."

Manager: "What can you complete while we resolve that? I will help clarify the approval today. Let us check progress tomorrow."

Know when to give direction

When a person lacks essential knowledge, explain or demonstrate the task. When a decision involves urgent safety, policy, or service requirements, state the required action clearly. Use questions to develop judgment after immediate needs are addressed.

The situation I want to coach through

Two questions I will ask

Agreed next step, support, and check-in

Bring the conversation to your team

Interested in a leadership workshop or speaking engagement? [Contact Dr. Paul Gerhardt](#) to discuss your audience and goals. More lessons: [linkedin.com/in/drpaugerhardt](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drpaugerhardt).