Veterinary teams often use rapid-fire questions that elicit short answers from clients because they feel it allows them to gather medical history quickly. However, research shows that open-ended questions prompt more complete and helpful responses.

Asking structured questions and open-ended questions:

- Gives people permission to admit to or describe realities at home
- Steers replies toward action-able information
- Sets expectations for the level of detail needed for you to comprehend the full nutritional and environmental situation at home

It takes time to form new habits when asking questions. Start by practicing these easy swaps.

### Closed Questions

*Provides less helpful information*

- Any concerns about [pet’s name]’s appetite, mobility, energy, or behavior?
- What do you feed [pet’s name]?
- Do you give treats, too?
- Is [pet’s name] a slow or picky eater?
- Does [pet’s name] have access to your other pets’ food?
- Does [pet’s name] beg for your food?
- Are you happy with [pet’s name]’s current food?
- Why do you feed that?
- Are you open to my pet food recommendation?
- Tell me about any changes you’ve noticed.
- Tell me everything [pet’s name] eats throughout the day, starting first thing in the morning on through bedtime.
- What are [pet’s name]’s favorite snacks?
- Talk me through [pet’s name]’s eating process from the time food is offered through when the bowl is empty or [pet’s name] walks away.
- What challenges do you face at home limiting access to your other pets’ food?
- Name everyone in your home or in your life who sneaks [pet’s name] people food.
- What do you like (and not like, if anything) about what you’re currently feeding?
- Are you happy with [pet’s name]’s current food?
- That’s interesting. Tell me more.

### Open Questions

*Provides more complete responses*

- Any concerns about [pet’s name]’s appetite, mobility, energy, or behavior?
- What do you feed [pet’s name]?
- Do you give treats, too?
- Is [pet’s name] a slow or picky eater?
- Does [pet’s name] have access to your other pets’ food?
- Does [pet’s name] beg for your food?
- Are you happy with [pet’s name]’s current food?
- Why do you feed that?
- Are you open to my pet food recommendation?
- Tell me about any changes you’ve noticed.
- Tell me everything [pet’s name] eats throughout the day, starting first thing in the morning on through bedtime.
- What are [pet’s name]’s favorite snacks?
- Talk me through [pet’s name]’s eating process from the time food is offered through when the bowl is empty or [pet’s name] walks away.
- What challenges do you face at home limiting access to your other pets’ food?
- Name everyone in your home or in your life who sneaks [pet’s name] people food.
- What do you like (and not like, if anything) about what you’re currently feeding?
- Are you happy with [pet’s name]’s current food?
- That’s interesting. Tell me more.

Try this...

vs.

...that