

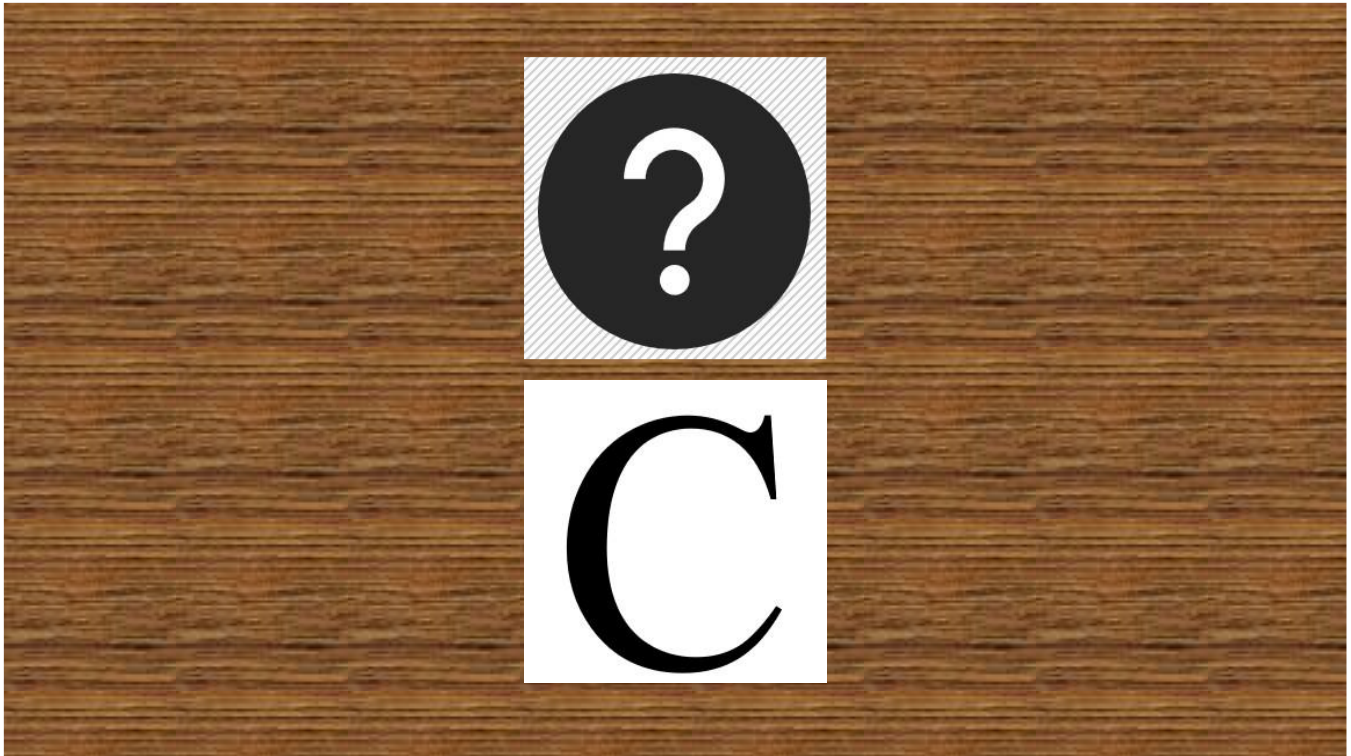
REASONATE

REASONING MOVES

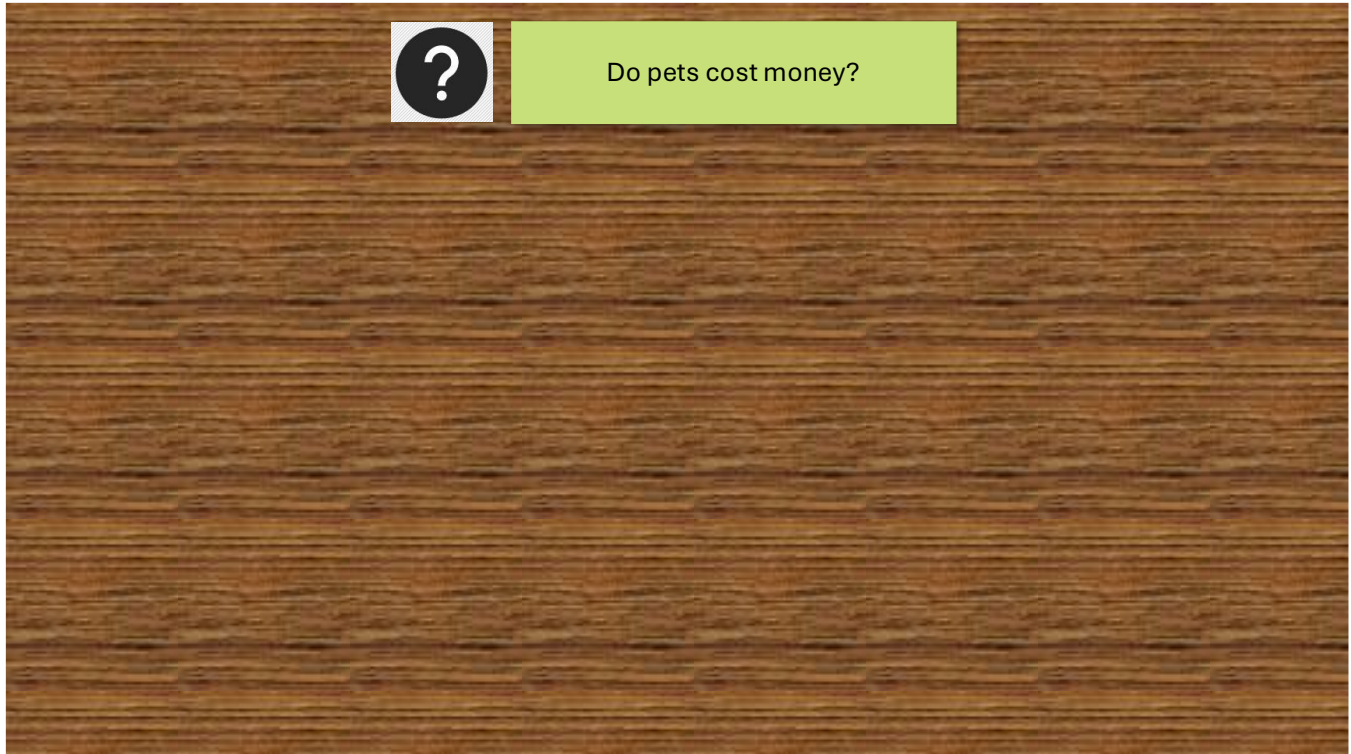
Asking Questions & Making Claims

Dōna Warren, dwarren@uwsp.edu

In Reasonate, players can ask questions and make claims.

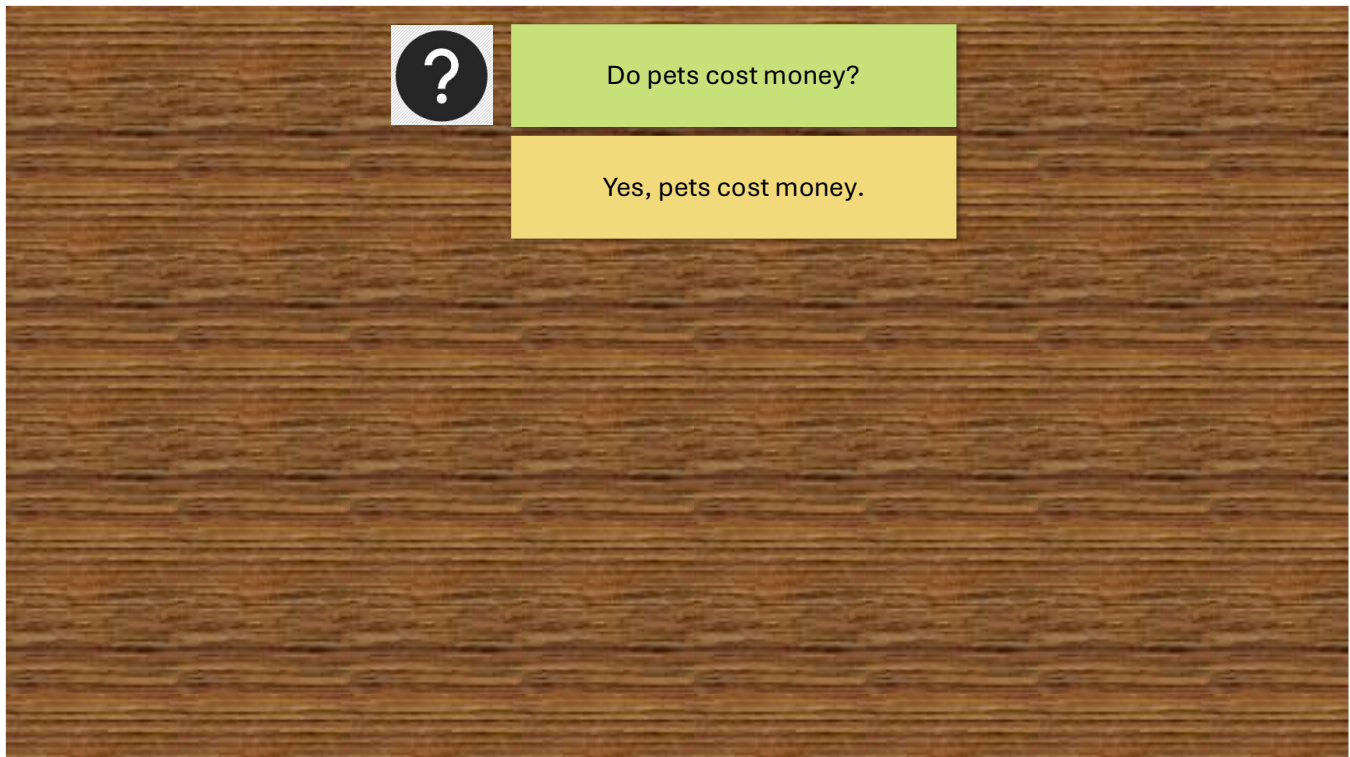


In fact, Reasonate always begins with a question and a claim.



The question that the players will answer is written on a question-colored sticky note.

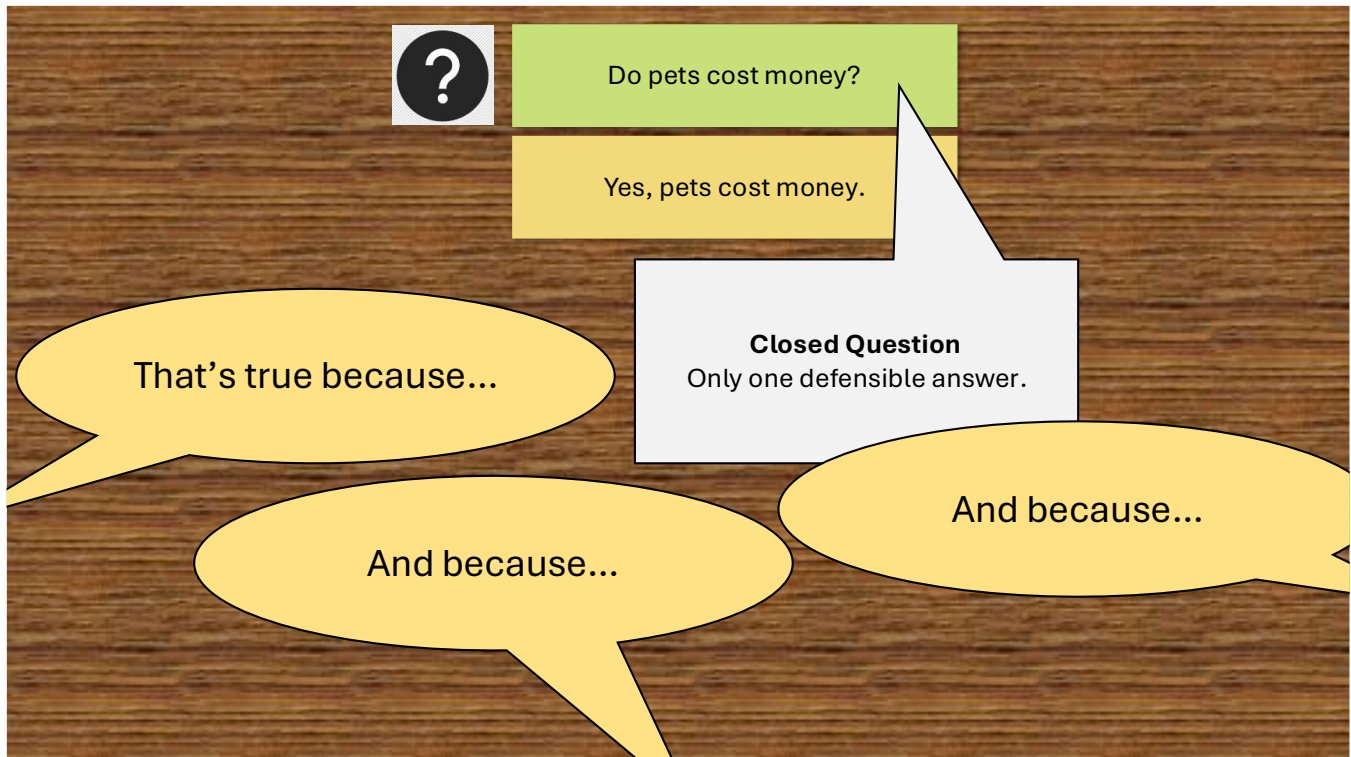
For instance, the players might decide to answer the question “Do pets cost money?”



Players then select a specific answer to that question for evaluation, and they write that answer on a PRO-colored sticky note which they place below the question.

In this case, the answer will probably be “Yes, pets cost money.”

Indeed, the fact that the answer to this question is so *obvious* should give us pause.

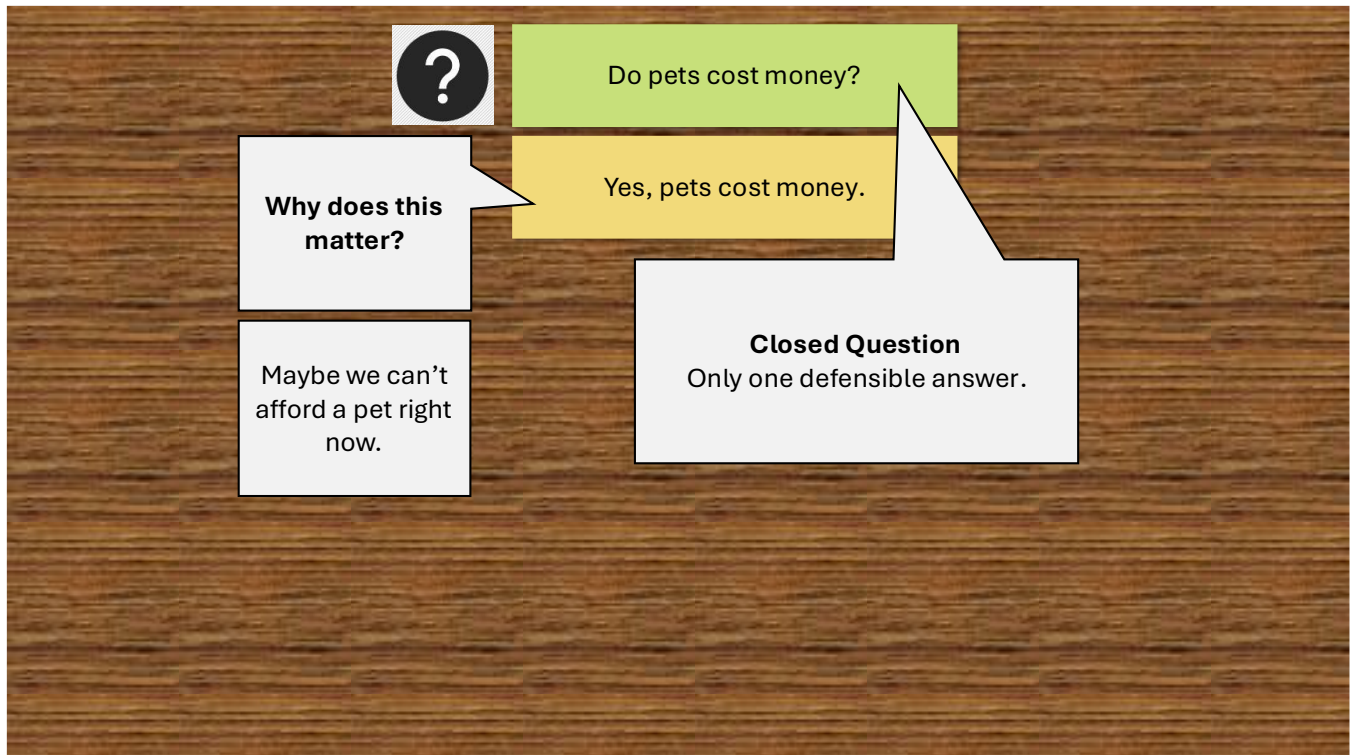


“Do pets cost money?” has only one defensible answer. We might call it a “**closed question.**”

We can support that one defensible answer, of course. Maybe we can note that pets require food, which costs money. (Don’t worry. We’ll talk about this support relationship and how to place our sticky notes later.) But because it’s hard to deny that the one viable answer is true, it’s hard to generate any objections that would seriously challenge it.

This is why closed questions don’t generate dialogue, just a chorus of agreement.

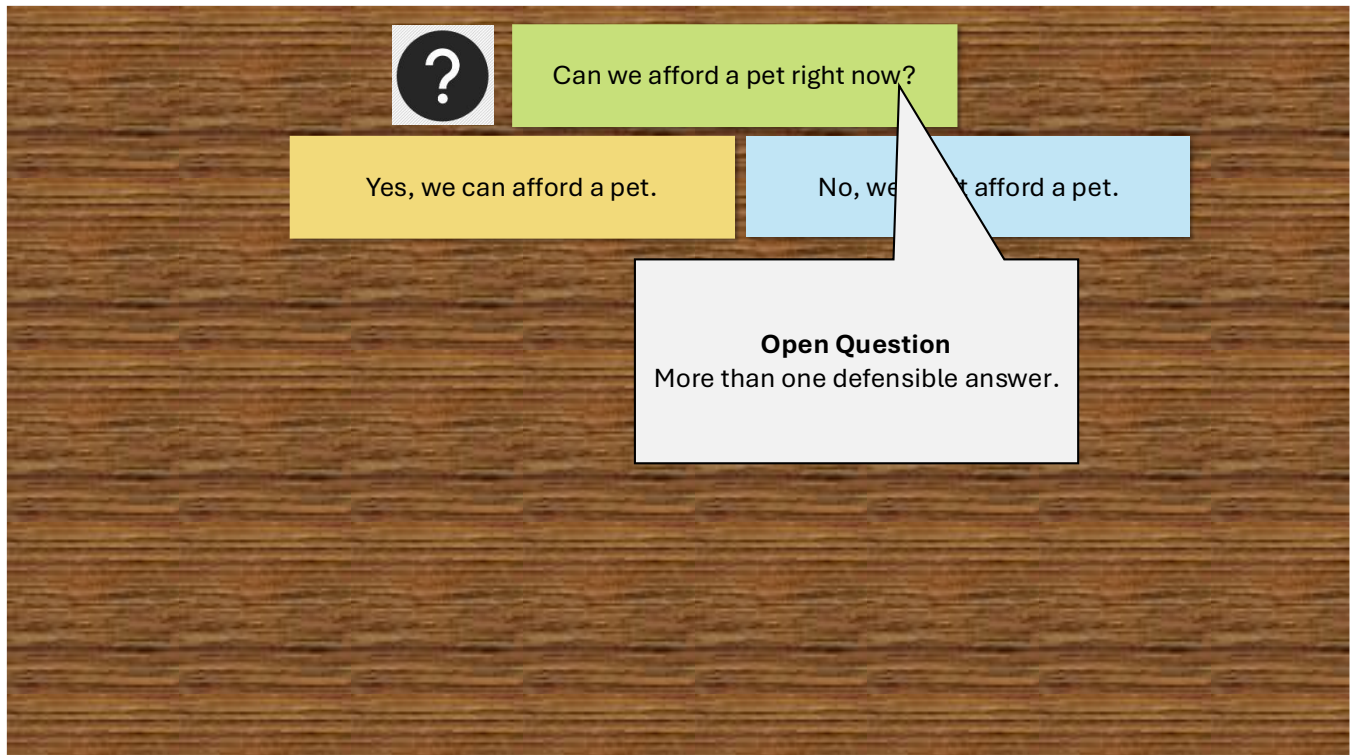
Because Reasonate is designed to capture dialogue, we’ll want avoid asking closed questions.



If we discover that we've accidentally asked a closed question, we can work our way to an open question by asking why we care about the answer to the closed question in the first place.

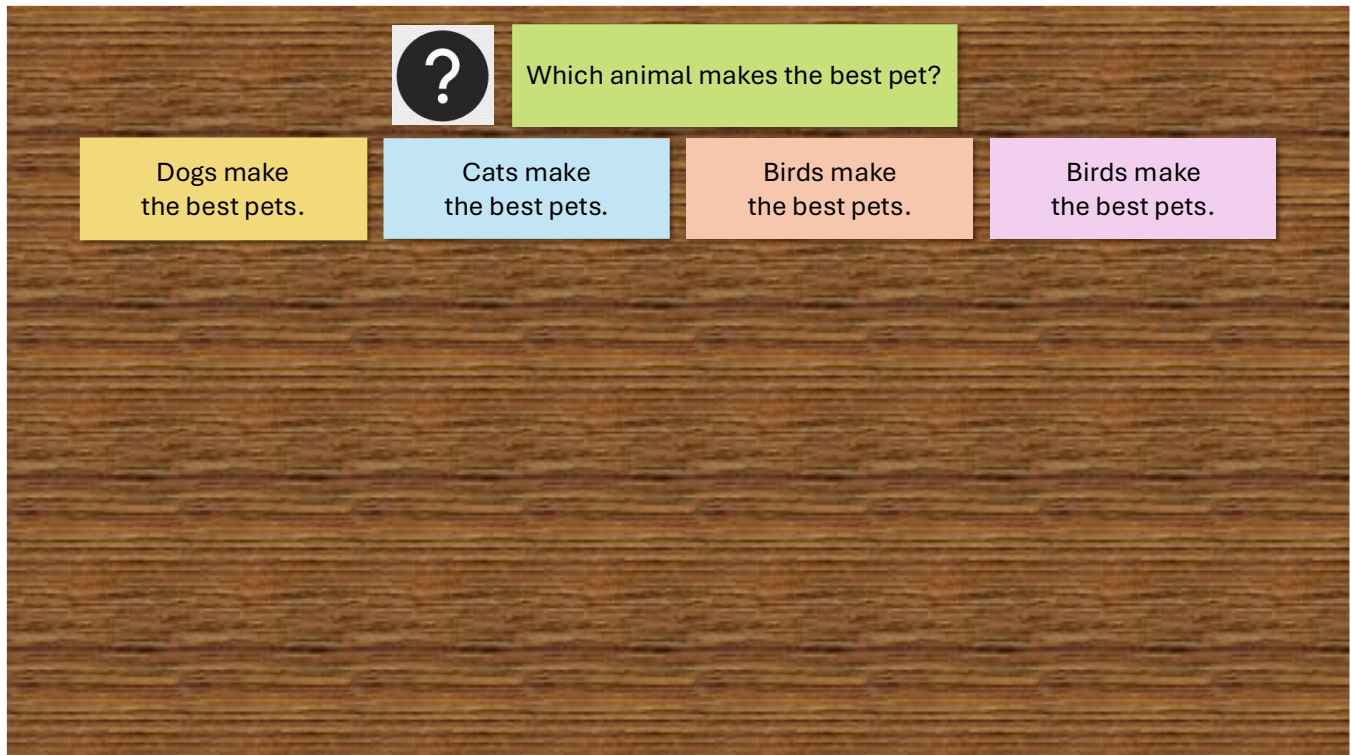
In this case, we might decide that we want to show that pets cost money because we are *really* concerned with whether we can afford a pet right now.

Once we see why we care about the only defensible answer to our closed question, we can more easily identify the real question at issue.



In this case, we're really wondering if we can afford a pet right now.

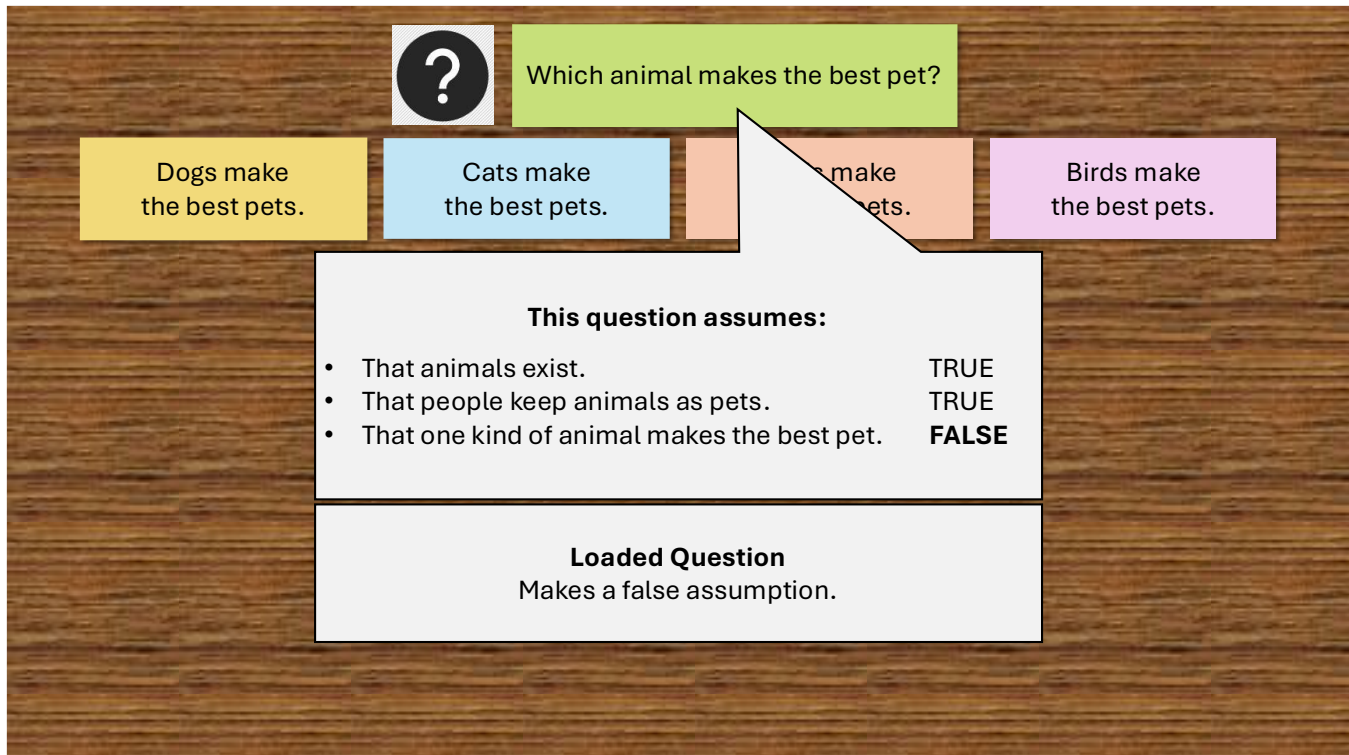
And because "Yes we can afford a pet," and "No we can't afford a pet" are both defensible answers, this is an open question, the sort of question that can surface genuine disagreements and so generate meaningful dialogue.



Let's consider another question: Which animal makes the best pet?

There are multiple defensible answers here, so this question is wide open. But it's unlikely that any of the answers will win out over the others. In fact, we might start to wonder if our question is unanswerable, and one reason a question might be unanswerable is that it makes a false assumption.

All questions assume things, so the fact that a question assumes *something* is never the problem. Problems arise when a question assumes something *false*.



This question assumes that animals exist, that people keep animals as pets, and that one kind of animal makes the best pet.

The first two assumptions are true. Animals exist and people keep animals as pets. But the third assumption is certainly false. It's not the case that one kind of animal makes the objectively best pet.

Questions that make false assumptions are sometimes called “**Loaded Questions.**”

Loaded questions aren't answerable because any answer presupposes that the false assumption is true.

When faced with a loaded question, we should see what question emerges when we drop that false assumption.



Which animals make good pets?

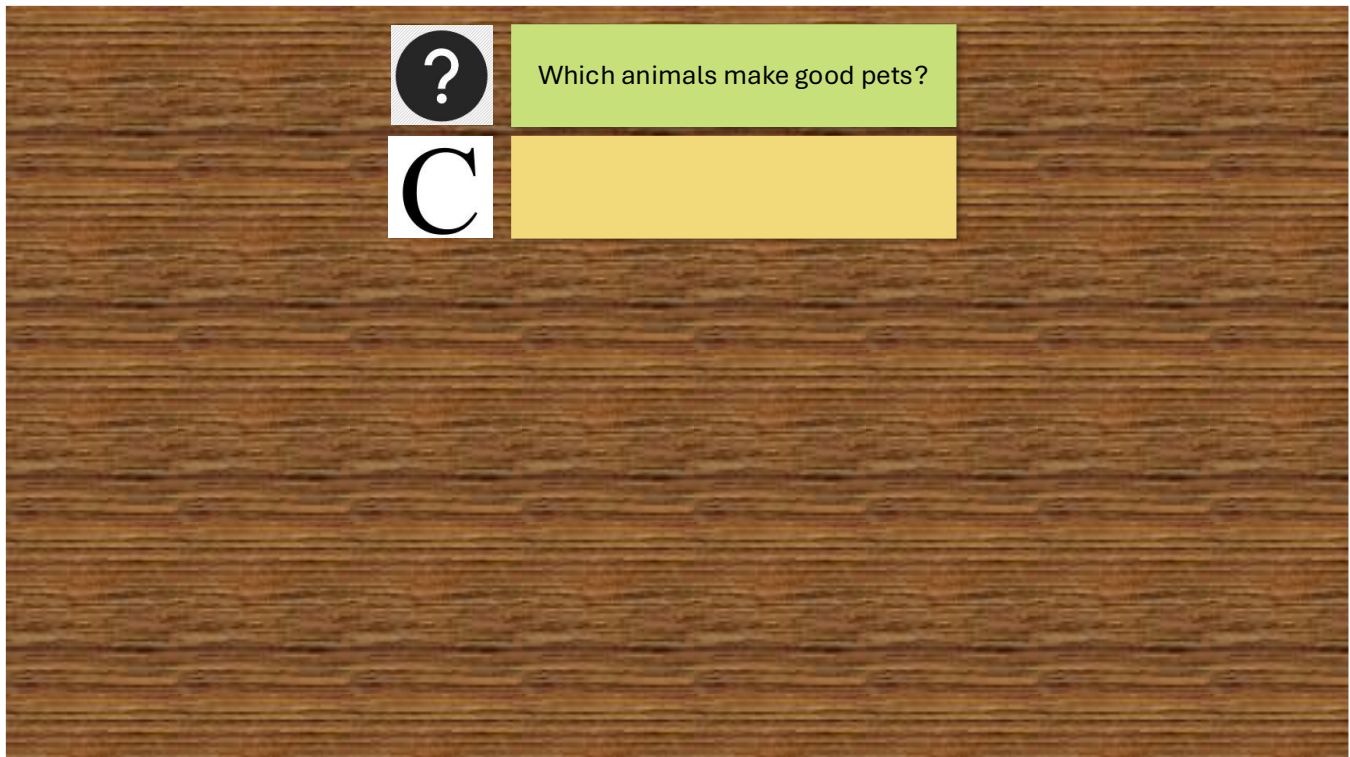
This question is fine (at least for now).

1. It is **OPEN** because it has more than one defensible answer.
2. It appears to be **UNLOADED** because it doesn't seem to make a false assumption.

In this case, we might get the question “Which animals make good pets?”

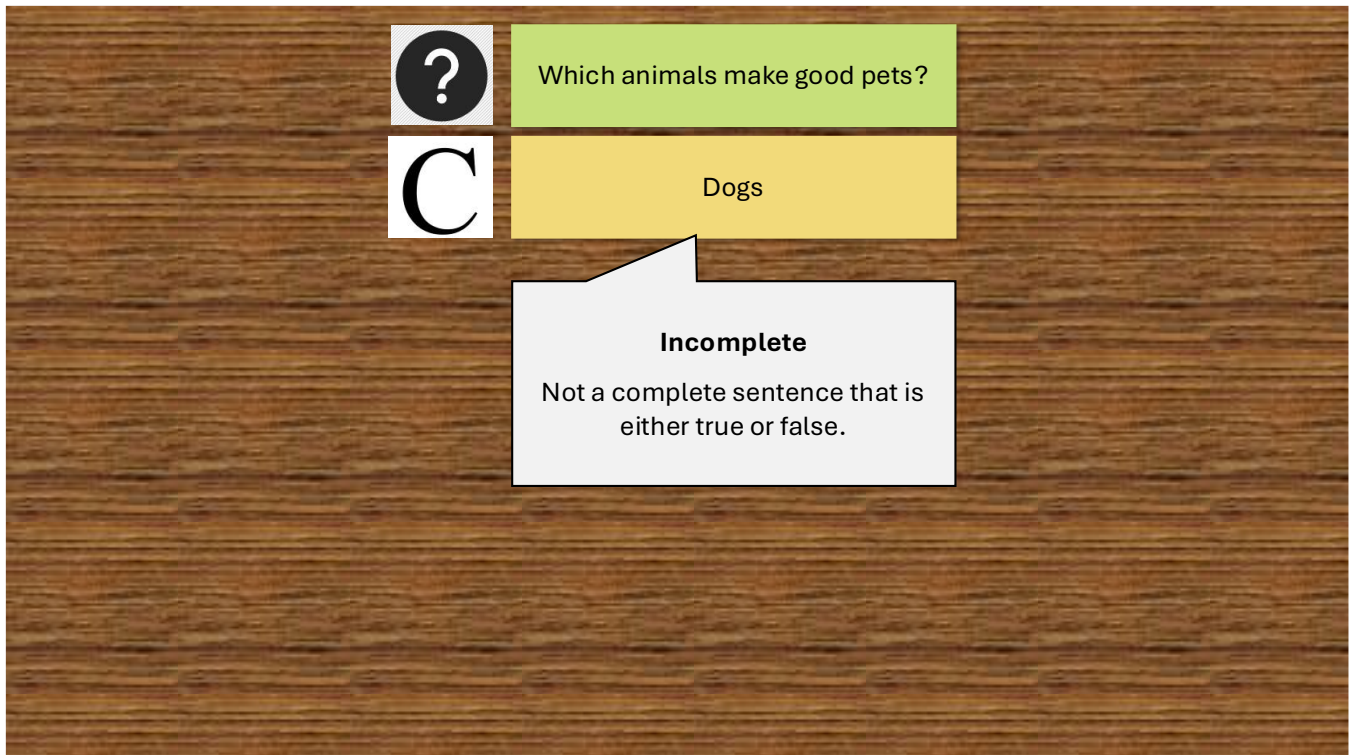
This question is fine (at least for now).

It is **open** because it has more than one defensible answer, and it appears to be **unloaded** because it doesn't seem to make a false assumption.



Once a question has been determined, players select a specific answer for evaluation. They write that answer on a PRO-colored note (because PRO will be defending it) and place it below the question.

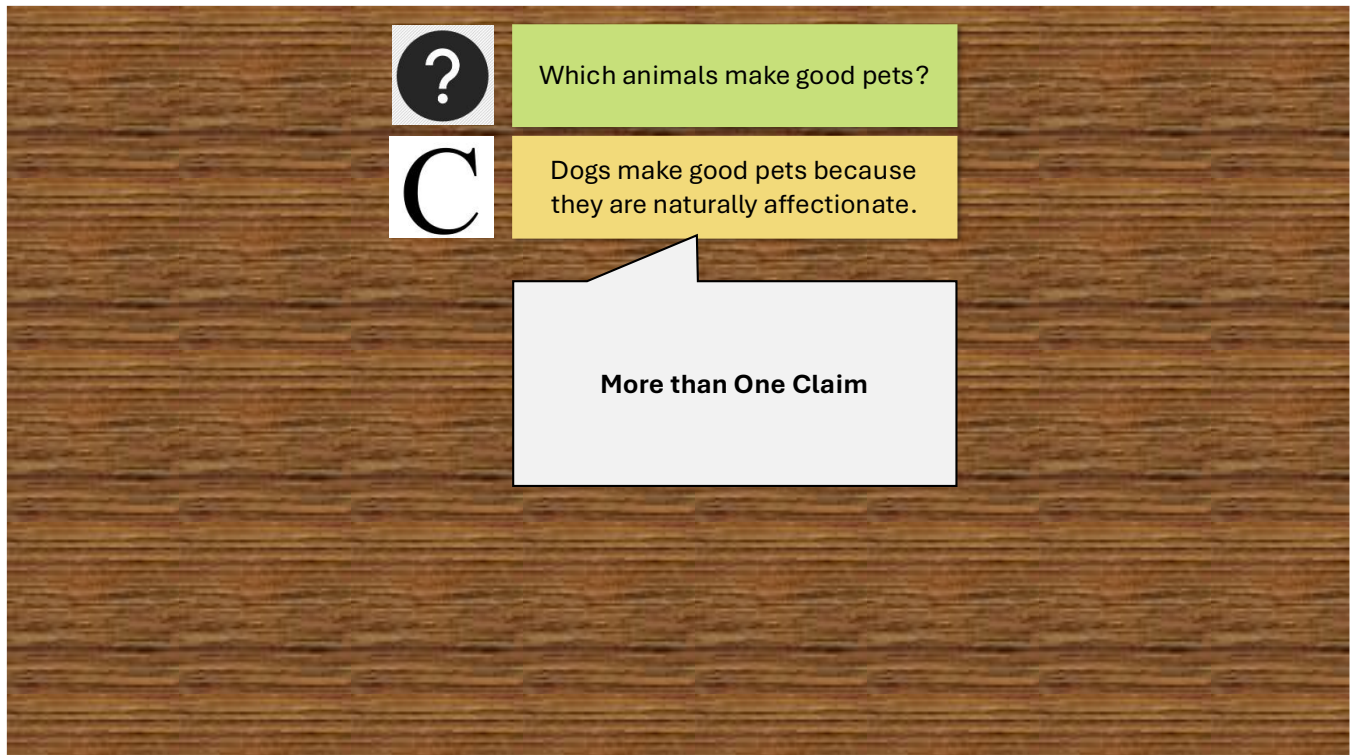
That sounds simple enough, and it is, but there are two things to watch out for: saying too much and saying too little.



For example, suppose these players decide that the answer is “Dogs.”

The problem here is that “Dogs” isn’t a claim because it isn’t a complete sentence and because a claim, for our purposes, is a complete sentence that is either true or false (although we might not know which it is). This note says *too little*.

The fix here is easy. The players simply write the complete sentence that they had in mind when they said “Dogs.”

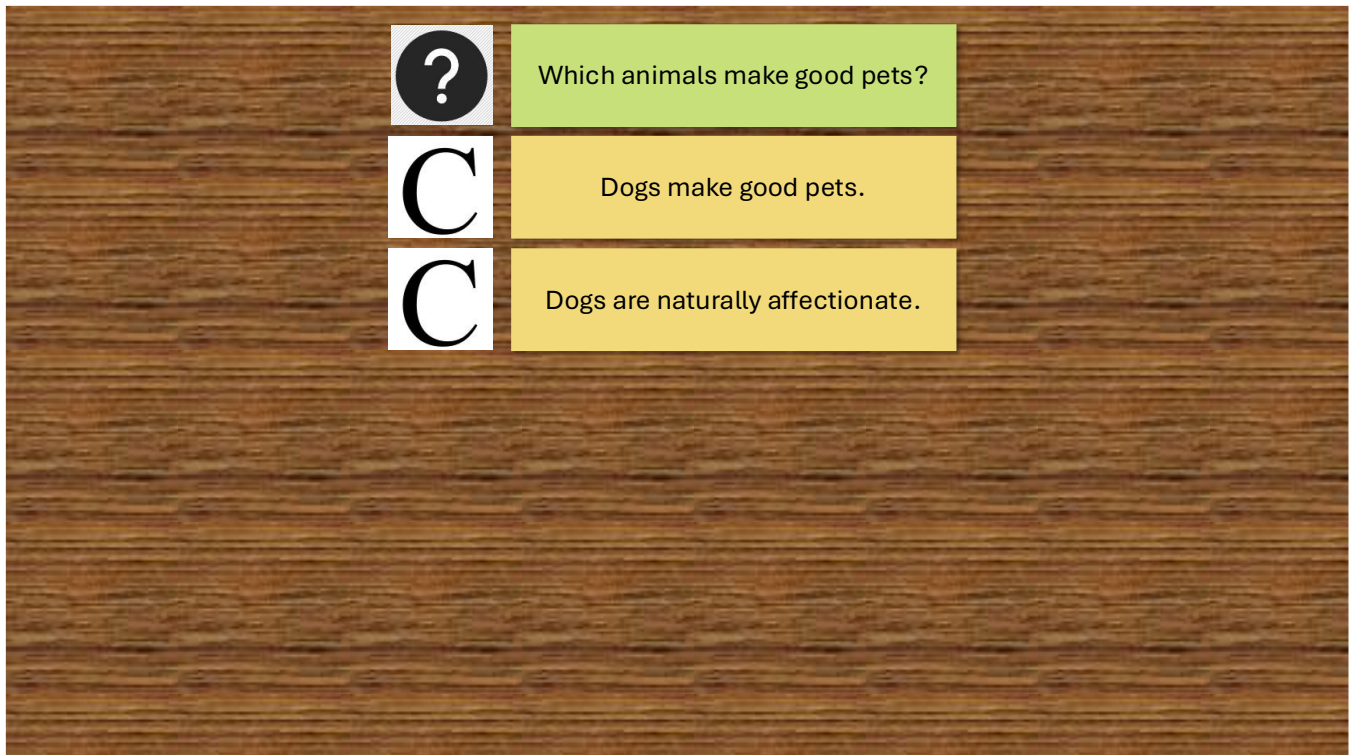


For example, in this case, the players might write “Dogs make good pets because they are naturally affectionate.”

That’s a complete sentence, so the players aren’t saying too little there. They are, however, saying *too much*.

They’re saying too much because this sentence asserts more than one claim.

Because we’ll want each note to assert only one claim, compound sentences will often need to be divided into multiple notes.



In this case, “Dogs make good pets because they are naturally affectionate” is divided into two notes, one saying, “Dogs make good pets” and the other saying, “Dogs are naturally affectionate.”

This allows us to represent the relationship between those claims by placing “Dogs are naturally affectionate” beneath “Dogs make good pets,” as support.