Tips for Asking Effective Questions

Open-ended: cannot be answered with a yes or no response.

Examples:
"What do you think?"
"How do you feel about …?"
"What do you think caused "X" to happen?"
"How might we keep this from happening again?"

Reflective: repeat what the other person has said.

Examples:
"So you're thinking the timetable is ambitious?"
"You have an idea to improve our tracking system, is that right?"
"So you're concerned that our customers won't value this addition, right?"

Directive: seek information about a particular point or issue.

Examples:
"What steps would you take to accomplish this?"
"How will you complete the talent review?"
"How will this innovation impact the budget?"

Note:
- Avoid asking "why" questions. They tend to create defensiveness and shut down listening.
- Avoid using "hot words" such as *everyone*, *always*, *never*, etc.; people tend to stop listening to broad generalizations – or worse, they fight back to defend their honor, e.g., arguing about the one time they *did* do it right, or pointing out that *Kim* wouldn't agree with that.