



A Letter From the Editors

Hypophora

TikTok user [Elyse Myers loves to tell stories in a particular way](#). She poses a question, sometimes from the comments and sometimes because she believes we'd really like to know the answer, which is part of the fun. She then nods emphatically, folds her hands together in view on the table, and away we go. Why are we talking about TikTok and not the made-up word at the top of the page? That's a great question. I would love to tell you.

What's a hypophora?

While it might sound like a class of subterranean plant or another COVID variant, a hypophora is a rhetorical device in which a speaker asks a question and then immediately answers it. If you've ever been to an Alamo Drafthouse, you've heard a hypophora before your feature presentation.

Problem with a loud table? Raise an order card, and a manager will take care of it.

You might've sung along to this hypophora heard on Nickelodeon growing up.

Who lives in a pineapple under the sea? Spongebob Squarepants!

You might've been inspired by this hypophora delivered by Sir Michael Caine.

Why do we fall, sir? So that we can learn to pick ourselves up.

Question? Answer.

While a hypophora is a rhetorical device that poses a question, it is not the same as a rhetorical question. In a hypophora, the speaker answers the question. In a rhetorical question, the speaker assumes the audience already knows the answer.

How do we use a hypophora in content?

We're using hypophora across our content already. But like any rhetorical device, it's most effective for certain messages and when used sparingly.

- Introduce topics of conversation interesting or beneficial to your audience.

The effective hypophora is all about anticipating audience problems and interests. The question should be something buried in the back of their mind already that ignites a spark of interest once uncovered. “Yes, I’ve always wanted to know that!” “Oh, that’ll come in handy.” “Why didn’t I think of that?”

And by their nature, the hypophora is educational. Myers’ storytelling is certainly entertaining, but there’s also a clear intent toward empathy and learning. [Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson](#) and [educational content creator Hank Green](#) also employ the hypophora from time to time on the same platform to unpack big subjects in small spaces. Most of our content operates with the same constraints, so consider the hypophora when dealing with particularly bulky or complex educational requests or quota posts.

How do our self-driving cars detect traffic lights? We’ve placed numerous forward-facing cameras on the vehicle and ensure that the car’s GPS is updated with the latest map data.

When should you reseal your driveway? If your driveway is made of asphalt, you should look into a new application once every three years. Of course, we’re well-aware of how long a few years can feel, so once you can spot the color of individual stones in the pavement, then you know it’s time for a refresher.

The answer component to the hypophora must be as irrefutable as can be. Content concerning preference doesn’t make for an effective hypophora.

The best breakfast in town this morning? This bagel sammie.

Who’s going to give Waystar Royco its brightest feature? The middle son, Kendall Roy.

Maybe our audience isn’t craving a bagel this morning. Maybe our audience wasn’t invited to Kendall’s birthday party. When arriving at the answer, our audience becomes disinterested and incredibly aware they’re being sold something.

- [Pivot the conversation.](#)

Since the hypophora is so good at introducing topics of conversation succinctly, it makes sense that it can be used to pivot to other essential topics in the middle of a longer dialogue. For example, let’s look at this sentence we’re often writing in the middle of our negative review responses.

If you ever feel like something might be off with your order, let one of our servers know. We’re happy to have another look at it for you.

And when you feel like there’s something off with your order? Let us know, and we’ll have another look at it for you.

The first example is our typical conditional construction. The second is the same sentiment as a hypophora. As a pivot, consider the hypophora as an alternative to the conditional statement.

If you've got a problem with a loud table, then raise an order card. A manager will take care of it for you.

Problem with a loud table? Raise an order card, and a manager will take care of it.

What about those small but essential details in a bulky email request or something we just gotta fit into the BD from the customer? Consider pivoting with the hypophora.

Look, Ma! No hands! You'll never need to navigate a roundabout again with our selection of new and used self-driving cars. Whether you're leaving with a classic Tesla or a shiny and chrome Jetson, all of our strong, independent automobiles are backed by a five-year warranty. And after your brand new car drives itself off the lot? It'll return to us for all its routine maintenance so you never have to worry about oil changes and tire pressure again.

- Assess your target audience in content drafts.

Even if the hypophora doesn't work in the piece of content you're creating, the device itself is an effective tool at distilling audience needs and finding an appropriate angle to take. It demands that the speaker considers the audience's point of view. Start posing audience concerns as questions. See if the customer has any way to answer them. If not, keep asking. If so, keep the answer, cut the question, and sculpt and shape the answer into the content of your choice.

What's the best way to summarize the effective hypophora?

- It's a rhetorical device. A question followed immediately by its answer.
- It anticipates audience need and unpacks complex subjects with concision.
- It's a way to pivot the conversation to another subject.
- It should be used sparingly.

Quiz



Robb Briggs

Robb grew up in a lovable dump of a town in the Bay Area where the refinery hangs in the air, the infields are all dirt, and a \$2 dipped cone from Foster's Freeze is only a five-minute walk from Grandma's house. Doesn't say y'all. He believes: Han shot first; Austin needs better bagels; a constitutional amendment oughta outlaw the designated hitter; it only takes a long weekend to fall in love with a city; in a clean, well-lighted place.

Main Street Hub