

READING

LIFE'S ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Wait, what?

In this question, *wait* reminds us to stop and think. Before we make an important decision, we need to understand the situation fully.

How can I help?

When someone needs help, it's good to ask, *How can I help?* Then the other person can give you a specific answer, and you will be more useful.

What truly matters?

Sometimes it's hard to make a decision. When this happens, it helps to ask yourself: *What is most important?*



Students cheer during a Harvard University graduation ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts (US).

In a Harvard University graduation speech, speaker James Ryan talked about "life's essential questions." By asking these simple but important questions, we can make better choices in our lives. We can help others, too, Ryan believes. But how can these questions actually help us in our everyday lives? Here is one example:

Imagine. It's the summer after graduation, and you're doing an interesting internship at a company you like. The only problem is the internship is part time and unpaid. But, after a month of working hard, your boss offers

you a full-time job. You are excited about the opportunity until your boss tells you the starting pay. You stop and think, ***Wait, what?*** The pay is very low. You really want the job, but you wonder, *How will I support myself?*¹ It won't be easy.

Your boss gives you a few days to think over the offer, so you talk to a friend about it. You tell your friend you're not sure whether you should accept the low pay or quit and apply for other jobs. You're even considering taking some time off to do something else, like travel. Your friend listens and asks, ***How can I help?***

You ask your friend for some advice and she suggests that first you ask your boss for higher pay. However, if the company can't pay more, she says that you should ask yourself, **What truly matters?** *What is most important right now: the money or the opportunity to work for this company? How will your choice help you in the future?* You thank your friend and smile because you know that with the help of "life's essential questions," you'll make the right decision. 🎧

¹If you **support yourself**, you make your own money and live on your own.

A Read the title of the article. What do you think is one of "life's essential questions"? Tell the class.

B Read about the three essential questions in the box below the title. Then match each question (1–3) with its purpose (a–d). One purpose is extra.

____ 1. Wait, what?

____ 2. How can I help?

____ 3. What truly matters?

a. to help you make a difficult choice

b. to be sure you understand something well

c. to ask why something is true

d. to offer useful assistance

C Read the whole article. Then circle **T** for *true* or **F** for *false*. Correct the false statements.

1. James Ryan was a speaker at the University of Massachusetts. **T F**

2. In the article, you were offered a full-time job after four weeks at an internship. **T F**

3. You are excited about the starting pay. **T F**

4. Your friend says you should ask for higher pay. **T F**

5. Asking the question *What truly matters?* helps you make a hard decision. **T F**