

# Questioning Strategies Self-Assessment and Planning

**Teacher tool**

**Student tool**

Best Practice	I Do Well With This	I Need to Work on This	Notes/Plans for Improvement
1. Allow at least three seconds after posing a question before selecting a respondent.			
2. Wait two to three seconds before responding to a student's answer to a question so that the student has time to supply more information or give an expanded answer.			
3. Students repeat your question in their own words before answering.			
4. Questions are complex, with few questions involving only simple recall of information.			
5. Support student thinking by telling them what you're going to ask when you are giving the assignment.			
6. Students create questions about the content to ask each other.			
7. Most of the questions are higher order.			
8. When a student answers a question, another student supplies details or poses another question related to it, then another student may add to that response.			
9. Provide questioning stems, such as "What might happen if. . .?" or "Your answer seems to suggest. . ." to students to assist them in responding to each other.			
10. Give students standards for their responses, such as "Be prepared to explain," or "Have opposing points of view to discuss."			
11. Students create devil's advocate questions.			

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## Socratic Teaching Guidelines

✓ **Teacher tool**

\_\_ **Student tool**

Critical thinking is fostered not by answers but by questions. The better the questions, the more powerful the student thinking. Socrates, whose principles endure to this day, created a model for questioning. When Socratic questioning is used as a teaching tool, students pose questions to each other to stimulate thinking and advance conceptual knowledge. Answers to questions lead to further questions, all of which spiral thinking and learning upward. Some types of Socratic questioning are as follows:

**Probing Thinking.** These types of questions dig into the thinking of the respondent.

- What causes you to say that?
- Could you explain what you mean?
- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?

**Probing Assumptions.** Students examine hidden assumptions on which their thinking might be based.

- What must be true for your thinking to be correct?
- What other assumptions are possible?

**Probing Reasoning.** Breaking reasoning down into its component parts, or challenging rationale, can cause deeper and more specific thinking.

- Why do you think so?
- How do you know this?
- What facts are there to support what you are saying?

**Probing Alternate Perspectives.** These questions help students look at issues from more than one point of view.

- What's another way to look at this?
- Why is this viewpoint stronger than the other one? How do you know?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each viewpoint?

## Integrating Writing into Discussion

**Teacher tool**

**Student tool**

A discussion should not rely solely on oral interaction. Writing can be an effective tool for engaging everyone, offering quiet or shy students the opportunity to actively participate and helping focus excessive talkers on another form of expression. Writing also allows for deeper, more elaborate reflection.

Try integrating the following writing activities into class discussions, then reflect on whether they improved engagement and plan how you might adjust the strategy for future lessons.

Discussion Writing Strategy	Date Implemented	Notes/Plans for Improvement
<p><b>Class Secretaries</b> A class secretary records the discussion and provides a summary to the rest of the class, instead of every student taking individual notes. All students review and correct this record. Rotate so that every student can be class secretary.</p>		
<p><b>Free Writing</b> Students write for a few minutes to gather their thoughts or come up with new ideas. They might examine a passage in a text, reflect on a given question, or articulate an opinion. Best used before starting discussion on a new topic.</p>		
<p><b>The One-Minute Paper</b> Students write down their comments, reorganize their ideas, or respond to a specific question. Best used if the discussion is declining or is too intense or students look confused.</p>		
<p><b>Reflection Papers</b> Students write brief summaries and commentaries of the discussion, evaluating their own role or writing one thing they learned from it. Comments are then shared with the class.</p>		
<p><b>Student Questions</b> Students write down one or two questions.</p>		

Source: Young, X., & Taylor, M. (1997). Lecture at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

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Quality of Questions

# Monitoring Classroom Questioning Example

Class/Period: Social studies

- Key:
- + = Student answered question correctly.
  - = Student answered question incorrectly.
  - V = Student volunteered to answer.
  - A = Student was absent.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all respondents are *nonvolunteers*.

Student	Date				
	4/27	4/28	5/1	5/3	5/4
Adams	+	+			
Aielo	-	+	-	+	+
Banks	+	A	A	A	+
Bridges	-	-	-	+	+
Case	+	+	+	+	V+
Carrabas	-	-	-	-	+
Davies	+	-	+	+	+
Franks					
Georgio	+	+	+	+	+
Jones	-	-	+	+	-
Kurtz	V-	-	-	+	+
Maru	+	+	+	V+	-
Reyes					+

Notes:

- Three students, Adams, Franks, and Reyes, have not been called on consistently by the teacher.
- Bridges, Carrabas, and Kurtz have answered incorrectly a majority of the time they were called on.

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# Activities for Involving Students in Discussions

**Teacher tool**

**Student tool**

Try these activities in your units and lessons to promote discussions that will include all students. Some activities will work better than others depending on the class and type of lesson. Record when you used the strategies and whether they successfully involved students in discussion. Then reflect on whether you'll use that activity again or how you will modify it for this or another lesson.

Activity	Date	Level of Success	Reflection and Modifications
		Not ← → Highly 1 2 3 4	
<p><b>Table Hop/Pass</b> Pose a question and, after giving students a few seconds of think time, hop from table group to table group, calling randomly on one student. The student can respond or pass. After the activity, call on a few students to summarize the various responses.</p>			
<p><b>Response Cards</b> Orally ask a question or display it on an overhead and have students simultaneously hold up index cards, signs, dry-erase boards, magnetic boards, small chalkboards, or the like to indicate their responses. Response cards can be pre-printed with responses, such as yes/no or A-B-C-D, or write-on cards.</p>			
<p><b>Hand Signals</b> Students indicate with thumbs-up or thumbs-down whether a given question is true or false or if they understand the content.</p>			

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Student Participation

# Getting Students to Ask the Questions: Self-Assessment

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**Teacher tool**       **Student tool**

To help you determine how well you employ discussion techniques, rate yourself on how often you use each point of the following strategies.

Key:    R = I do this regularly.  
         S = I do this sometimes.  
         N = I need to develop this strategy.

### Beginning a New Unit

The class thinks of questions that could be asked about the topic.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I use true brainstorming techniques, accepting all contributions without judgment, encouraging students to build on each other's ideas, and encouraging far-out or unusual ideas. The goal is a large number of ideas or questions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I capture all student questions in writing and use student assistants to help me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I categorize the students' questions, combining items that overlap or are overly similar, and use symbols to indicate which are most or least interesting and whether they are easy or hard to answer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I teach a developmentally appropriate form of Bloom's Taxonomy to help students categorize questions from lower- to higher-order.

### Questioning Homework

Students form questions about an assignment for the next day's discussion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to write three comparison questions about the story they are reading.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to find the most interesting question left unanswered by the reading.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to identify the question the author was trying to answer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to write a question that will demand at least 10 minutes of thought to answer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to find a question that has no answer, or two thousand answers, or an infinite number of answers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to ask a question that is the result of a bigger question. Students then ask the rest of the class to identify the bigger question.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I ask students to identify the most important and the least important questions.

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