

MANAGING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

What Is an Effective Question?

An effective question is a mental probe that guides a learner's thinking toward an appropriate response. Questions are designed to review, process information, predict, or check memory skills. The student responses provide data for immediate instruction and planning. Questions are used in the appropriate format at the right time.

What Are the Instructional Benefits of Effective Questioning?

- Questioning is a quick way to check for understanding and to assess students' needs and strengths before, during, and after learning.
- Effective questions allow the teacher to guide a student's thinking. While helping a student process information, the teacher gets a sense of the student's problem-solving capabilities. The student gains a feeling of achievement for finding the answers by himself or herself.
- Questions can lead students to connect old and new learning.
- A question can be used to focus students' attention, stimulate curiosity, and challenge minds.

Teacher's Role

- Differentiate questions based on the learner's abilities, knowledge level, learning styles, preferences, and interests.
- Develop a variety of questioning techniques to use as assessments. This keeps students intrigued and challenged.

Figure 5.8	
<i>Questioning Technique</i>	<i>Directions for the Technique</i>
Random call	Ask a question and pause to provide "think" time before calling on a student to respond. This keeps students in suspense as to who will be chosen to respond, so everyone prepares a mental response. Randomly call on someone for an answer.
Unison call	Ask a question and provide "think" time. Call for an oral group response.
Quick call pass	Ask a question. Call on a student to quickly call on a classmate for the response. If the student hesitates, call on someone for the answer.
Cluster call	Distribute question(s) to groups. Each team selects a recorder and reporter. Students form a brainstorming cluster around the recorder. Each group comes to consensus on the best answer to the question. The reporter announces the team's best response to the class.
Partner call	Identify two students as A and B partners. The teacher asks a question, gives wait time, and calls on A or B partner to respond. The designated

- Strategically ask questions as checkpoints for understanding before, during, and after learning segments so you can adjust your instructional pace if necessary.
- Use Bloom's taxonomy as a question guide to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Ask effective questions to promote thinking that links new information to a student's personal world. For example, ask the learner how the information or skill can be used in daily activities at home.

Demystifying Effective Questioning

You can introduce effective questions by describing them as brain probes. Use dialogue similar to the following to discuss the purpose of questions:

Questions are asked to learn what you know and don't know. They give you opportunities to give your opinions and thoughts about the things you are learning. They help you think in different ways. Often they lead you into more detail about what you know. All answers are accepted, honored, and valued in this classroom.

Use this coaching metaphor to help students understand the value of questions in their world:

A coach asks the players questions before, during, and after the game.

Examples:

What do you need to do to help us win this game?

What are the best moves to make against this team?

What will be the other team's game plan?

Questions are asked to provide assistance and guidance when the going gets tough.

Examples:

What happened out there?

Why didn't you _____?

What do you need to do the next time you are in that situation?

Student's Role

- Listen carefully to the entire question.
- Think before you answer. Get your thoughts in order and mentally prepare to respond.
- Follow the teacher's directions for responding.
- Don't be afraid to show what you know! Express yourself.



FIVE (STAR) MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

1. Present questions in novel ways.

Figure 5.9

Container Questions	Action Questions	Written Questions	Oral Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basket • Box • Bucket • Can • Compartment • Cup • Drawer • Envelope • Folder • Glass • Hat • Jar • Pan • Pouch • Sack • Sock • Suitcase • Tub • Tube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll a cube with a question on each side. • Use a spinner. • Sing to favorite tunes. • Use game board formats. • Select easy or difficult questions from a container. • Toss a dice to identify the question choice. • Race with a classmate to the question. The winner selects the question for the opponent to answer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a survey • On the board/overhead • In a PowerPoint presentation • In a journal • In a station • On a choice board • In a shaker or jar • In the book • On a test • Under desks or chairs • On ribbons • In a spotlight • In graffiti style • On the door • On a mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the group • From partners • From individuals • From consensus • Read from written material • In a game format such as "21 Questions" • In a computer program • Recorded • In a rap

2. Occasionally give students unexpected ways to respond to questions. Use each response strategy until they master or take ownership of it. When you use it again, the learners will know how to use it without extensive directions.

Examples:

- Give partners time to whisper the answer to each other, agree on the best answer, and write it down.
- Engage students in physical actions for responses such as standing, sitting, or using hand signals.
- Ask each student to respond by writing a response in a shape related to the study.
- Use response cards with the possible answers written in unique fonts or neon colors.
- Ask students to record responses on a sticky note or small piece of paper. They wait for a signal and show the answer to a neighbor before the teacher gives

(Continued)

3. Use Bloom's taxonomy:

- Make a checklist of the key terms on each level of Bloom's taxonomy to monitor use.
- Introduce questions strategically throughout the plans to develop better thinkers and problem solvers.
- To differentiate, allow students to choose questions from a list designed for their level.
- Create questions from independent assignments or group work that require written or oral responses.
- All students need to know the definitions of words used in questions to be able to answer them. Post a chart of frequently used terms in the classroom. Allow students to brainstorm the interpretations of each term, and then write it beside each word. Learners understand each term when they use their own terminology.

Examples:

Sequence: Place in order.**Contrast:** Tell how _____ and _____ are different.

4. An effective questioner understands that quality is better than quantity and timing is important. Knowing when to ask the right question is a talent that develops over a period of time.

It is crucial to consider the student's feelings and emotions for differentiated instruction. A lead-in question may be the key to opening conversations. Use open-ended questions such as "Tell me about . . ." or "What did you learn?" Questions such as these lead the learner to important self-discoveries, provide opportunities to express feelings, and allow the teacher to find out what the student knows about a specific topic or skill. They are excellent assessment tools.

5. Vary the types of questions. Remember to ask both explicit and open-ended questions. Be aware that most students have to be taught how to answer questions that require implicit responses.

Literal: The answer is in the writing. You can identify the information you need by pointing to it. Remember, the answer to a literal question is usually "right there."

<i>What</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Where</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>How</i>
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Inferential: The answer is not stated outright—it is inferred—so you have to read between the lines to discover it. It is like seeing darkness behind a door. You use clues to guess what is on the other side of the door. Read the sentence and use the clues in the text to come up with an answer when you cannot point to it in the passage.

- *How did the character feel?*
- *What was the weather like?*

Evaluative: The answer explains the importance or value of the information. It gives the benefits of the facts or ideas.

- *Why is this information (character or idea) important?*
- *Will the characters become better citizens as a result of their experiences? If your answer is yes, tell how you think they will improve.*

Examples of Effective Questioning

Example A: Questioning Games for Novelty in a Small Group

Pull My String

1. Use one string for each student in the group.
2. Tie one end of each string to a ruler.
3. Ask each student to hold the other end of a string.
4. The teacher holds all of the rulers.
5. Ask a question. Give students time to think of the answer.
6. Pull a student's string for a response to a question.

On the Ball

1. Create a list of numbered questions.
2. Write a number on each ball.
3. Place the numbered balls in a large container.
4. Call on a student to pull a ball from the container and read the question that corresponds to the number.
5. Ask all students to prepare a mental response.
6. The student who selects the ball calls on someone to respond.

Mystery Question

1. The teacher or students prepare questions relevant to the current study.
2. The questions are hidden in a jar, sack, envelope, or can.
3. Each student selects a mystery question to answer.

Example B: Selecting the Right Question and Probing Statement for the Right Time

Differentiating Questions Across Content Areas

Intentionally select the best questions to uncover the information you need to probe the learner's thought and to guide the differentiated instruction. Figure 5.10 presents examples of different questions that may be used across content areas.

When the student is identified for an independent differentiated assignment, use questions similar to the those in Figure 5.11 before, during, and after the tasks for conversation starters and feedback. These interactions place the responsibility on the student to identify immediate needs and progress of the assignment. This provides the teacher with ongoing feedback related to what the student is learning.

Figure 5.10	
<i>Purpose of the Question</i>	<i>Sample Questions and/or Statements</i>
To focus attention, stimulate curiosity, and challenge minds	What do you think about when you see ____ (a photo, object, word, etc.)? What are the important facts? What will happen next?
To find out what they know in order to identify needs before, during, and after learning	What do you know about this? What do you remember? Brainstorm a list of related facts and important details.
To check mental preparation to work	Do I need to explain a part of the directions for you? Do you have any questions about the steps you need to take? What do you need before you begin this activity?
To check for understanding	What steps did you use to get your answer? What were you thinking as you created the _____? How would you explain this in your own words?
To discover opinions or views	What do you think about this? What is your point of view or opinion? What do you think is the problem or solution?
To pinpoint the most valuable information	Can you tell me the most important part to remember? What was the main idea? What are the highlights?
To identify what the student wants to learn next	What would you like to learn next? If you had a choice, what would you choose to learn about _____? What was the hardest part for you? How can I help you?
To connect old and new learning	How do you know about _____? Where have you used this information? Does _____ remind you of an experience you have had? Tell me about it. How will your experiences help you learn this new information?
To organize ideas	What goes with this part? What are your thoughts about _____? Categorize them. What comes first? next? last? Can you name three highlights from the beginning, middle, and end of _____? List the highlights.
To address what the student needs to know	What would help you learn more about _____? What do you need to learn next? What was difficult for you?

Figure 5.10	
<i>Purpose of the Question</i>	<i>Sample Questions and/or Statements</i>
To corral knowledge	<p>How can you organize everything you know or remember about _____? Write your responses in your journal.</p> <p>Which memory tool can help you remember the important information?</p> <p>What do you know about _____? Design a graphic organizer for your answer.</p>
To give personal ownership	<p>How can you use this information in another class?</p> <p>How would you compare our new learning to an experience in your life?</p> <p>What is the best way for you to learn _____?</p>

Figure 5.11	
<p>Before</p> <p><i>The Designing Stage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to learn about this topic or study? • What tasks would you like to complete to learn more about it? • What resources or materials do you need? • How much time will it take to complete your tasks? • How will your final product be presented? • How would you like to be graded on your work?
<p>During</p> <p><i>The Assessing Progress Stage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you done so far? • What have you learned? • How can I help you? • Do you need more or different materials? • Have you made any new discoveries? • Is there anything that we need to revamp or change in your assignment? • Show me some examples of your work.
<p>After</p> <p><i>The Feedback Stage</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn? • What were your favorite tasks? most challenging? most difficult? • If you are assigned another contract, which segment would you want to keep? • What needs to be changed the next time? • Did you need more assistance? ___ yes ___ no When? • Did you understand each assignment, task, and procedure? ___ yes ___ no If not, identify and explain the problem(s). • Were you given enough time? ___ yes ___ no If no, explain. • Would you like to complete another assignment like this? ___ yes ___no Why or why not?

Differentiated Instructional Management

Work Smarter, Not Harder

