

Questioning – an important pedagogy

Types of questions	When to use
Closed questions	Closed questions nearly always only require a response of yes or no. Closed questions will not lead the questioner to find out very much at all. They can sometimes be used as ice breaker questions. Are you sitting comfortably? Is it warm enough in here? They can also be used to end a conversation or a coaching session. A closed question can be opened up once a fact is established, or reassurances given. Closed question have their place but do allow the person being questioned to be let off the hook to some extent.
Open questions	These are the questions we all need to use to create a deep and rich learning environment. They are questions that cannot be answered yes or no. There are only six words that will start an open question and they are what, how, who, when, where and why. Be sparing with the use of the word why. It can be judgemental. Why did you think that was a good idea? Why would you assume.....? Open questions create opportunities for deep thinking and soul searching. They are useful for critical or creative discussion and will ensure there is a structured and detailed answer.
Probing questions	Probing questions are useful for establishing more about a given subject or gaining clarification. They encourage others to say more about a given subject or lead them to realise they need to do more than they have so far. These are the questions that are still open but dig a bit deeper and give a more informed picture. What more could you do with this? How could you build on your argument here? Where is there more information to deepen your account of this? Probe to deepen knowledge and understanding and move from simple recall
Leading questions	Leading questions are those you might use when you know what you want and need to lead someone towards your point of view. You might want much more in terms of a piece of written work so the question might be 'What else could you add in here to complete this piece of work? How else could you develop this? Where else can you look for more information? What are your thoughts on....? Try to find questions here that evoke a positive response and not a negative one

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Loaded questions	Loaded questions put the questioner in control and need to be carefully used. How many times is this that you have forgotten to bring your homework to school? Do you like turning up late every day? They can be open or closed and are manipulative. They can be manipulative but do have their place when you want to challenge poor behaviour or tardiness for instance
Funnel questions	Funnel questions ensure that you start with a specific point and then broaden out what you are looking for, or in fact, this could work the other way as well. For example, you might ask what was it you didn't understand and then hone in on the answer to find out more. Asking a simple question and then asking for more detail can be a useful way of showing you are taking an interest. Did you enjoy the book? What specifically interested you about the book? What else might you read in a similar genre?
Recall and process questions	Recall questions help to ensure individuals can reflect on their learning and recall information they have already learnt. What do you know already about this subject? How has this helped your understanding? Process questions, on the other hand, require the person being questioned to pass an opinion or be definite about a decision or situation. What are the advantages of choosing that approach? What makes you sure that you have the right information to make a judgement? How do you know that is the right method to use? Process questions encourage critical thinking and in-depth evaluation and can challenge the learner to think more deeply
Rhetorical questions	Questions that don't really require an answer. Usually they are statements phrased as questions to put the listener at ease. What did the Romans ever do for us? Isn't it nice being able to work from home? What colour is Monday? Rhetorical questions can be fun to ask and build rapport and trust with learners.

Remember to think carefully about the tone of your question. The way you ask a question can make a big difference to how the listener receives it.

Tone, context, intonation, and body language all help us make sense of what is being asked of us. Think carefully about how you are received when you are asking questions in a virtual environment. Your presence may be seen and viewed differently.

Using the word why at the beginning of a sentence can appear to be judgemental and make the learner feel less positive about their work or less motivated about improving what they have produced. Be careful and choose a different starting point such as What.

Body language is less evident through the screen. Be careful about eye contact which will depend of the camera and where it is pointing. You want to make sure that the recipient of your questions feels confident that you are with them and interested in their response.