

Questions Provoking Critical Thinking

Varying question stems can sustain engagement and promote critical thinking. The timing, sequence and clarity of questions you ask students can be as important as the type of question you ask. The table below is organized to help formulate questions provoking gradually higher levels of thinking.

Thinking Skills	Purpose	Sample Action Prompts	Example Questions ¹
<i>Lower Levels</i>			
Remembering	memorize & recall facts	recognize, list, describe, identify, retrieve, name	What do we already know about...?
			What are the principles of ... ?
			How does ... tie in with what we learned before?
Understanding	interpret meaning	describe, generalize explain, estimate, predict	Summarize ... or Explain ...
			What will happen if ... ?
			What does ... mean?
<i>Higher Levels</i>			
Applying	apply knowledge to new situations	implement, carry out, use, apply, show, solve, hypothesize	What would happen if...?
			What is a new example of...?
			How could ... be used to...?
			What is the counterargument for...?
Analyzing	break down or examine information	compare, organize, deconstruct	Why is ... important?
			What is the difference between... and...?
			What are the implications of...?
			Explain why / Explain how?
			What is ... analogous to?
			How are ... and ... similar?
Evaluating	judge or decide according to a set of criteria	check, critique, judge, conclude, explain	How does ... affect...?
			Why is ... happening?
			What is the best ... and why?

			Do you agree or disagree with the statement...? What evidence is there to support your answer?
			What are the strengths and weakness of?
			What is the nature of...?
Creating	combine elements into a new pattern	design, construct, plan, produce	What is the solution to the problem of...?
			What do you think causes...? Why?
			What is another way to look at...?

¹ From Alison King, "Inquiring Minds Really Do Want to Know: Using Questioning to Teach Critical Thinking," *Teaching of Psychology* 22 (1995): 14.

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Brown University
 Providence, Rhode Island 02912, USA
 Phone: 401-863-1000



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