

Questioning Skills to Try in your Study Group

“Try to” List

1. *Try to pause for 5 seconds after asking a question.* Now everyone can think carefully and gain confidence before responding!
2. *Try to ask open-ended questions rather than those that require a yes or no answer.* This requires students to explain *how* and *why*, and you may open a lively discussion.
3. *Try to avoid answering your own questions.* Otherwise students will learn to wait until you give them the answer.
4. *Try to follow up responses with the question “Why?”* This will help the student who could not answer the initial question to understand how the answer was reached!
5. *Try to limit the use of questions which rely almost completely on memory.* The goal is to learn at higher cognitive levels beyond memorization. These questions might be good for a quick warm-up at the beginning of the session.
6. *Try to avoid repeating the student’s answer immediately after they answered.* This gives credit to the student for coming up with the answer, builds listening skills in the group, and encourages future participation.
7. *Try to follow up a response by fielding it to the rest of the group.* This allows for multiple perspectives or opinions on a solution.
8. *Try to avoid giveaway facial responses to responses.* Showing negative reactions discourages future response.
9. *Try to avoid asking questions that contain the answer.* Examples include “Now, you will have to _____, won’t you?” “This is a _____, isn’t it?”
10. *Try to avoid calling on only one particular person.* All students except the one you called on will turn off their brains and wait for the answer. Ask more than one person for the answer.
11. *Try to avoid labeling the degree of difficulty in a question.* “This is an easy one...” The responder will not feel any worth for answering correctly because it was easy, and conversely the responder will feel even worse if answered incorrectly!
12. *Try to call upon students who are quiet/reluctant to participate.* This goes along with being inclusive of everyone’s opinions and perspectives.
13. *Try to refer to previous student responses.* This requires students to compare, justify, and question each others’ responses to their own.
14. *Try to call on students randomly when everyone is willingly participating.* This guards against favoritism and keeps students on their toes for when they will be called on next.

References:

- Black, Beverly and Kaplan, Matt. *A Guidebook for University of Michigan Graduate Student Instructors*. The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, 2000.
- Johnson, David R. *Every Minute Counts*. Dale Seymour Publishing, 1982. pp. 8-16.

Effective Questioning in Study Groups

There are many types of questions to ask which will enhance your study session.

Ask questions of clarification concerning complex concepts/theories to ensure that everyone is on the same page. Start with this type of question concerning the recently covered material to get a feel of what level the group is at. Figure out where the difficult content lies.

Ask questions at varying cognitive levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, etc.) so students get practice in thinking about the material in different ways. Ask questions in such a way to promote visual, audio, and kinesthetic responses.

Ask probing questions (why, how) which ask students to deepen their ideas, provide justifications for conclusions, or articulate assumptions.

Ask open-ended questions for multiple ideas or answers before attempting any evaluation or selection among them. Carefully consider the alternative views.

Ask questions to define concepts by their own experience.

Ask questions involving *direct* comparison and contrast that require students to develop bridging concepts or dimensions.

Ask questions by analogy, simile, or other *indirect* comparison. Stimulate new concepts by asking for comparisons among apparently unrelated elements. Use unique examples.

Ask questions about the question allowing students to come up with their own questions. Come up with different ways to rephrase the same question. Break large questions down into smaller ones.

Ask questions to summarize or generalize the main points when completing a topic area before moving on to the next topic.

Ask deductive questions requiring implications or extensions of concepts and theories.

Ask connective questions relating past material to present material and future material.

Ask students to question what they have seen and heard.

Guide someone to the answer by asking a series of smaller leading questions.

Write down the questions asked in the session and post them or email them out.

References:

- 1) Andrews, J. *Teaching Assistance: A Handbook Of Teaching Ideas*. TA Development Program, University of California-San Diego, p. 142.
- 2) Contributions from students attending the Spring 2006 preceptor training session, UT Learning Center.