

HOW TO ASK A QUESTION

Questioning is an art and a most integral part of good teaching. Adept questioning takes concentration, careful planning, and patience.

To understand the art of questioning, let's consider:

1. The reasons people ask questions
2. The basic types of questions
3. How to formulate good questions.

Why do people ask questions? For the following reasons:

1. To obtain information
2. To gain attention
3. To get assistance when faced with a problem
4. To satisfy curiosity
5. To gain recognition and have some personal contact with the teacher
6. To test viewpoints and judgments the subject.
7. To keep the teacher off the subject.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

1. **Convergent Questions:** "Zero in" on a particular -topic,, "Where was Jesus born?" This question leaves little room for probing, expansion, or speculation. It's answer depends on the student's ability to recall data. The student either knows the answer or not.
2. **Divergent Questions:** which "fan-out" from a specific question such as: "How did the early Christian community view the Eucharist?" or "What were the Parables and how did Jesus use them?" These lead to examples, possible contradictions, varying viewpoints, and even further questions.
3. **Remembering Questions** are based on material already presented in class. They often begin with words such as: Who, What, Where, How, and When.
4. **Reasoning Questions** will almost always begin with "Why" and will encourage a student to take facts and information and translate them into his or her own words.
5. **Evaluating Questions** will always encourage students to share their opinions with the class ' and try to put themselves into the situation being discussed.
6. **Creative Thinking Questions** seldom have just one answer. Students are able to involve themselves and their experiences. There are usually no "correct" answers. Teachers should avoid giving solutions.

HOW TO FORMULATE GOOD QUESTIONS: A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. Questions should be worded to make students think and not only to recall facts or events.
2. Avoid questions which may be answered by "yes" or "no." If that is the response, ask, "Why did you say yes?", etc.
3. Do not repeat questions. Students should know that you expect them to listen. If a child continually misses the question, perhaps their problem is physical and everything possible should be done to help them.
4. Make it a practice to encourage students to answer in their own words. Rote responses should be kept to a minimum and used only when defining important terms.
5. Answers should be worded in complete sentences, students should include the question in the answer.
6. If a student answers "I don't know," and the teacher accepts this, the class will soon sense that this reply will suffice and the teacher is in for problems. If a student answers, "I don't know," continue to ask the student a series of short questions. If this fails, the student should not be excused or forgotten. others should be solicited for the answer.
7. Always state the question first and then choose the student to answer. To do this in reverse will riot keep the class alert. Also, do not ask questions in order of seating or any other definite pattern.
8. Direct your creative thinking questions to the brighter students and factual questions to the slower ones. This gives everyone an opportunity to succeed and should be done without attracting particular attention to your system.

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An example of a Scripture lesson about "The Prodigal Son" (Luke, 15:11-32), using the types of questions :

Remembering Questions:

What did the younger son do one day?
Where did he go?
What job did he hold?

Reasoning Questions:

Why did the younger son leave home?
Why was he alone after his money was gone?
Why did he wish to return home?
Why did the father accept him back?
Why was the older son angry?

Evaluating Questions:

What would you do if you were the younger son?
Would you return home as he did?
Was the older son wrong in his feeling jealousy toward his brother?
Have you ever felt strong jealousy?
When?
Why?

Creative Thinking Questions:

What was the reason Jesus told this story
For whom do the characters in the story represent?
Could they be figures today?
Give examples.
Why do people seek fame and fortune and reject those who love them most?