

## Effective Questioning

We use questioning in a variety of ways. Our key purpose is to develop learning and extend thinking. Asking questions raises issues and from this the teacher builds up knowledge and information about the children's understanding and misconceptions. Time needs to be invested in framing key questions to use during the demonstration and modelling part of the lesson to ensure learning progresses. Key questions, include ***prompting, promoting and probing*** may be recorded in the teacher's medium or short term planning. **Wait or 'thinking' time** is essential to give all children the opportunity to consider and respond. This then enables more children to contribute to discussion and misconceptions can be dealt with more effectively. The use of **'talk partners'**, where children can rehearse and scaffold their answers will lead to deeper responses from the children and therefore provide much more information for the teacher about the extent to which children have understood new learning.

### Five templates for effective questioning

(Taken from Shirley Clarke's books on effective formative assessment)

#### 1. A range of answers

##### Impact:

- develops thinking skills
- improves reasoning skills
- promotes discussion and explanation
- reveals misconceptions
- encourages debate

Ask a question and give a range of possible answers for children to discuss. Include definite *Yes* answers, definite *No* answers and some ambiguous answers to enrich the discussion. This template is not helpful when only one answer is correct and the rest are wrong, because there is very little to discuss!

##### Example

Instead of asking "*Who can remember what a streamlined shape looks like?*" draw five different shapes on the board and ask the children to discuss which shapes are streamlined. This produces high-quality discussion.

## 2. A Statement

### Impact:

- Encourages open discussion and debate
- Develops critical thinking
- Reveals misconceptions and understanding
- Gives pupils confidence in expressing their opinions

Simply turn a question into a statement, and ask whether pupils agree or disagree with the statement and to give reasons. “Closed” questions, with one right answer, are clearly not as effective as those which need explanation.

### Example

Instead of asking “*What did a Viking look like?*”, say “***This picture shows a Viking. Do you agree or disagree?***”

## 3. Right and wrong

### Impact:

- Encourages problem solving
- Identifies the success criteria
- Stimulates curiosity and interest
- Assess knowledge
- Reinforces previous learning
- Demand explanation

Two opposites are presented to pupils. They are told that one is “right” and one “wrong”, and they have to decide how we know this to be true.

### Example

Instead of asking “*What would you find in a healthy meal?*”, show two pictures of meals and ask: “***Why is this meal healthy and this one unhealthy?***”

#### 4. Starting from the answer/end

##### Impact:

- Promotes reasoning skills
- Elicits prior knowledge
- Reinforces and revisits learning objectives
- Children identify the success criteria
- Good for assessment
- Inclusive, because all can come up with their own ideas and solutions, at many levels

##### Examples:

Play fair is the answer. What might the question have been?

Water, glass, the moon and shiny material can all do this. What might the question have been?

The answer is square. What might the question have been?

The answer is map. What might the question have been?

The answer is list. What might the question have been?

Here is my well-built house. What can you see?

The Romans invaded Britain. Why?

1066 was a very turbulent year. Why?

The prince kissed Sleeping Beauty and she woke up. What needs to be in place in the story before this happens?

Bricks are the best material for building a house. Why?

#### 5. Opposing standpoint

This template involves introducing a different point of view in the question, rather than the conventional slant.

##### Impact:

- Improves debating skills
- Encourages reasoning skills
- Develops respect for other points of view
- Teachers get pupils to substantiate their opinions
- Encourages lateral thinking

##### Examples

Instead of asking “*How did Cinderella feel about her stepmother?*”, ask: “**How could Cinderella have helped her stepmother become a better person?**”

You might ask “**Is it fair that some children in the world do not have what we have?**” Give a sweet to all the pupils wearing a watch. Other children are likely to be upset and the ensuing discussion could lead to children really understanding how it would feel to be treated unfairly, and that life is unfair and that some people treat others unfairly all the time.