

University of British Columbia  
Faculty of Education  
Physical Education Teacher Education

**Questioning Techniques**

This is one of the areas in teaching that can really make a difference in student learning by the way the questions are formulated. The use of questions is one of the most important teaching techniques. How good are your Questioning skills?

It's easy in a group/class situation to go to sleep or zone out. Keep them interested and engaged by several of these techniques:

<p><b>Scanning</b> Keep looking around to see whether people are showing interest, confusion, agitation, etc. Their faces and body language tell you lots.</p>	<p><b>Rehearsing</b> Help them think by talking what they perhaps should be thinking. This may mean summarizing understanding so far or making tentative conclusions. Then scan to see if they are with you.</p>
<p><b>Circulating</b> Move around to different points in the teaching space. Point your body ranging back and forth looking down lines and diagonals of people. All in the line will think you are looking at them. Look into eyes—not just scanning, but pausing on people without staring.</p>	<p><b>Repeating</b> When you have an answer from someone, it is often good to repeat it back to the group, as many will not have heard it clearly. A technique you can use is to rephrase the question to the person who responded in the form of a question.</p>

**Presenting Questions**

Most questions that teachers ask are simple recall questions and low in Bloom's Taxonomy. Comprehension questions require the student to demonstrate understanding in addition to mere recall. Analysis questions cause the student to apply that comprehension to a new setting. Evaluation questions ask the student for his or her beliefs or opinion.

1. Be sure the question is clear in your own mind. Think through what you want from the student before you ask the question.
2. Frame the question without calling on a specific student. When you call on a student before the question is asked, the other students tune out.
3. After framing the question, pause while everybody has a chance to think of an answer, then call on a student to respond. It's called Wait Time. Try to wait 2-4 seconds, which might seem like an eternity.
4. Ask only one question at a time. Multiple questions are confusing and are likely to result in student misunderstanding.
5. Use recall type questions first to be sure students have the knowledge, then proceed to higher level types of questions.

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**2 Basic Question Types**

<b>Closed</b>	<b>Open</b>
Easily recognized because it starts with words or phrases like: Do, Does, Is, Can, Could, Will, Would, Shall, Should	Designed to give information, they start with words or phrases like: How, Why, When, Where, What, Who, Which

**Group Questioning**

A general question asked to ‘thin air’ usually gets no answer as people either think it is rhetorical, are too shy to ask, too intimidated to ask, or don’t want to look foolish.

1. Who are you asking?
  - a. Direct your question to a **specific individual**. Give them a couple moments to realize they are being asked a question. Example: “We just finished practicing how to pass a takraw ball using the inside of the foot. I’d like to know if you can tell me 3 key points about this.” PAUSE “Jim, can you tell me 3 key points about passing a takraw ball using the inside of the foot?”
  - b. Ask a **selection or subset** of the group. To ask a subset from the group, first qualify them, and also let them know how they should make themselves visible. Example: “Please put your hands up if you can tell me 3 key points about how to pass a takraw ball using the inside of your foot.” Then identify a student.

**Probing Further**

Probing is the use of further questions to force the student to put together their partial knowledge into a more complete answer. It often involves the use of leading questions to help the student answer the initial question.

**Questioning Toolkit from Jamie McKenzie (fno.org)**

Essential	Subsidiary	Hypothetical	Telling	Planning
Organizing	Probing	Sorting & Sifting	Clarification	Strategic
Elaborating	Unanswerable	Inventive	Provocative	Irrelevant
Divergent	Irreverent			

Go to <http://www.fno.org/nov97/toolkit.html> to see how these questioning technologies and techniques are defined.

**Questioning Techniques**

Chunking	Chunk up and down for more or less detail
Columbo Technique	Asking stupid questions that get the answers you want
Funnel	Seeking more detail or more general information
Group	Tips for asking questions of many people at once
Tag	Small questions added to the end of a statement, right?

Go to <http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/questioning.htm> to see a variety of different techniques