

Powerful Questioning



“Questioning skills empower people as learners. They are pivotal for solving problems, creating solutions and enacting change.”

Godinho, S & Wilson, J. 2004 *How to Succeed with Questioning*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton Sth p5.



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Why are questioning skills so important?

- Ensure you have the skills to critically question what you read, view and hear.
- Ensure you become an information producer not an information consumer.
- Ensure that you are thinking, analysing, synthesising, evaluating and inventing not just fact finding.



Why are questioning skills so important?

- Ensure you do not plagiarise other people's information because it will be new information.
- Assist when you have to create your own research questions.
- Encourage reflection and/or self assessment
- Ensure that the researched information is new information and not just facts easily retrieved without any thinking.



How can I learn to create useful questions?

- Very broadly questions can be categorised as “open” or “closed”
- Closed questions are important for finding basic facts and information.
- Open questions are important for providing opportunities to create new information, to analyse, to invent, to reflect.



What are the differences between open and closed questions?

Closed questions

also called:

- Restrictive
- Dead end
- Lower order
- Skinny



Features of closed questions

How do I know if my question is closed?

- They can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”
- They give you facts
- They are usually easy to answer
- They are usually quick to answer



Features of closed questions

Closed questions often begin with:

- What
- Who
- Where
- When
- How
- Which



Examples of closed questions

Read the next slide which have some closed question examples.

Ask yourself are the questions:

- easy to answer or
- quick to answer or
- requiring a factual answer



Examples of closed questions

- When did London last host the Olympic Games?
- What new events will be included in the Beijing Olympic Games?
- Who opened the Sydney Olympic Games?
- Where were the first Olympic Games held?



The role of closed questions

- Closed questions can lead to effective learning.
- Their role is limited to being a starting point for establishing basic facts and understandings.
- They do not encourage higher order thinking where you must analyse, synthesise, invent, and reflect.
- That is the role of open questions



What are the differences between open and closed questions?

- **Open questions**

also called:

- powerful
- divergent
- higher order
- evaluative
- fat



Features of open questions

How do I know if my question is open?

- They cannot be answered with a fact
- They cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no”
- They encourage several answers or possibilities
- They require new thoughts
- They require critical thinking



Features of open questions

How do I know if my question is open?

Open questions:

- will involve problem solving and creative thinking
- will evaluate
- will synthesise
- will analyse
- will be original



Features of open questions

Open questions often begin with:

- What if...
- How might...
- Which would...
- Why does...
- Predict...
- What are some possible consequences...
- In what ways...



Examples of open questions

Read the next slide which have some open question examples.

Ask yourself:

- Does the answer require more than a fact?
- Does the answer require more than a “yes” or “no”?
- Is it possible to give more than one answer to the question?
- Does the question require creative thinking?
- Does the question encourage critical thinking?
- Does the question require you to justify your conclusions?



Examples of open questions

- Why do you think London was chosen to host the Olympic Games in 2012?
- How will the hosting of the Olympic Games affect the residents of Beijing?
- How have Olympic ideals been upheld over the history of the Olympics?



Changing questions from closed to open

- Instead of asking:
“Who painted the portrait?” (closed)
- Ask:
“What was the painter trying to tell us?”
- This way you still need to find out who the painter was but you also need to think about all the features of the painting and what you think the painter was telling you.



Matching question starter with purpose

- The following slides will assist you choose appropriate question starters based on your purpose.
- These starters will lead to open questions.



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

- If you need to:

Collect information

Make informed decisions

- Use: **WHICH**

- eg: Which environmental issue deserves most funding?



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

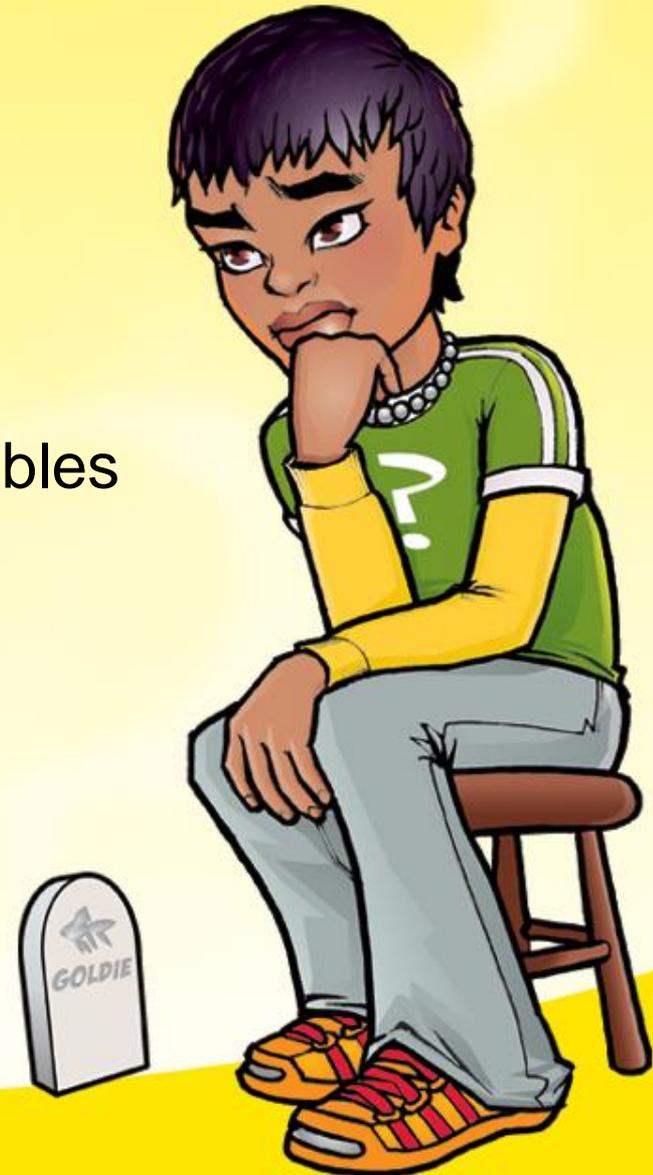
- **If you need to:**

Understand cause & effect

Understand relationships between variables

- **Use: WHY**

- **eg: Why do people abuse animals?**



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

- **If you need to:**

Understand problems

Weigh options and propose solutions

- **Use: HOW**

- **eg: How can the road toll be reduced?**



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

- **If you need to:**

Pose a hypothesis

Consider options

- **Use: WHAT IF**

- **eg: What if the world's oil resources ran out?**



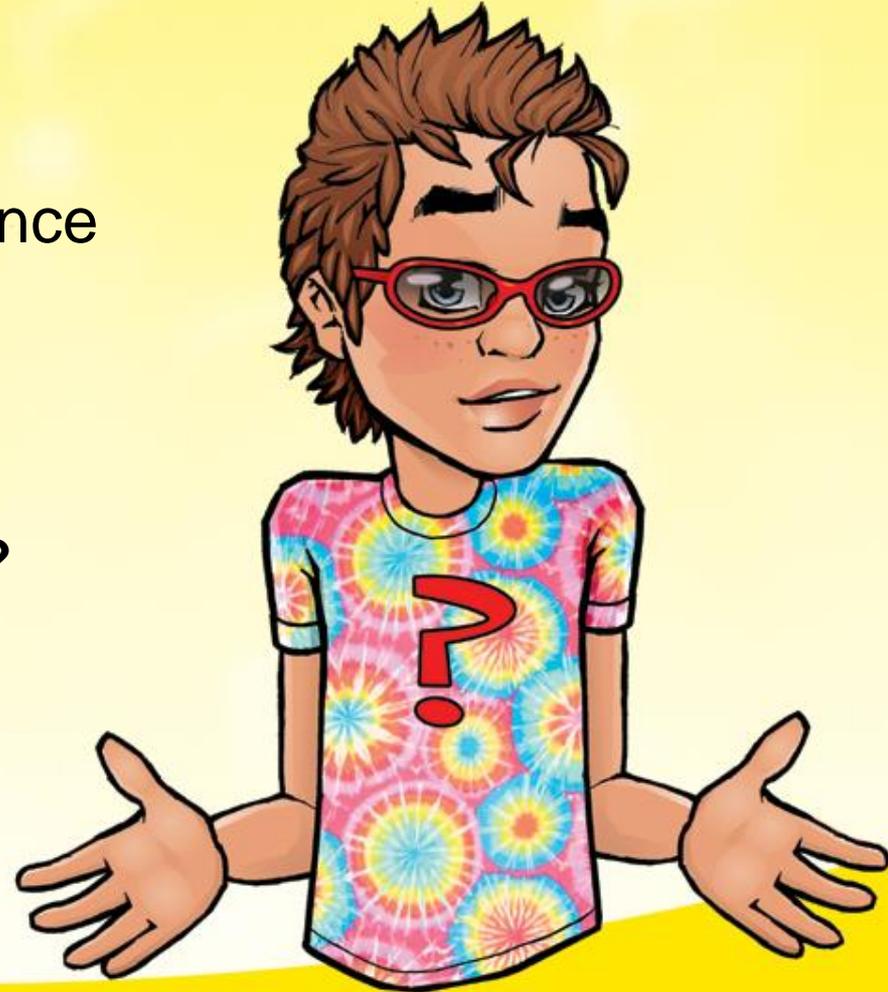
Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

- **If you need to:**

Make decisions based on evidence

- **Use: SHOULD**

- **eg: Should we clone animals?**



Matching question starter with thinking style

- The following slides will assist you choose appropriate question starters based on your thinking style.
- These starters will lead to open questions.

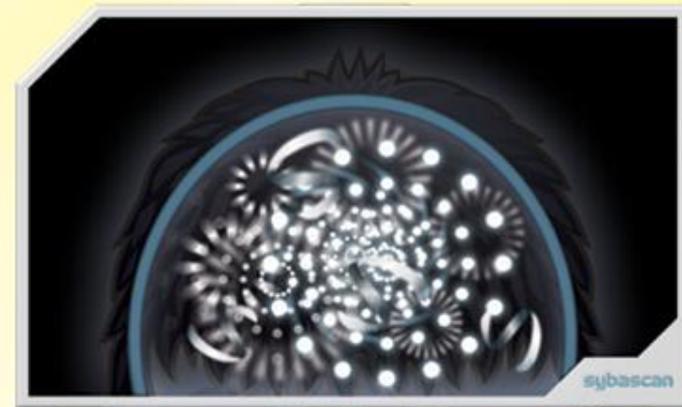


Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

If you need to be **creative** in your thinking

Try these starters:

- What if I changed...?
- How many different ways...?
- How might...?
- What are some different possibilities?
- What is the most unusual...?
- What will happen if...?
- How many different uses has...?



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

If you need to be **critical** in your thinking

Try these starters:

- How can I organise...?
- What might this be...?
- What do I expect...?
- What does the data mean?
- What are the important factors?
- What might be the reason?
- What order do these work best in?



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

If you need to **problem solve**

Try these starters:

- How many solutions are possible?
- What solution is best?
- What would I expect to be the reason for...?
- If I put all the parts together what can I create?



Tips for choosing appropriate question starters

If you need to think reflectively

Try these starters:

- How do I feel about...?
- Has my thinking changed?
- Next time I will...?
- I have learnt...?
- How can I...?
- I wonder if...?



Conclusion

- Learning how to create appropriate questions for your needs is vital in a world where there is so much information readily available.
- It is essential that everyone has the skills to critically question what they view, read and hear.



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