

Appendix G: Question-Asking Guide ¹

The Question-Asking Guide contains features that help students enhance their questioning ability so that they can formulate evaluative and reflective questions for their own learning.

Steps:

1. Write a few questions on a topic
2. Evaluate each question using the following two criteria:
 - a. Whether it mainly concerns factual recall or requires integration of information
 - b. Whether it is limited to the topic or encourages thinking that extends to other topics or even disciplines
3. Improve the questions with the help of the tips highlighted below,
 - a. Tips for upgrading your questions
 - i. Ask questions about the relationship between concepts (e.g. how one affects the other; why things turn out as it does, etc.)
 - ii. Ask questions about the possible connections between the material and everyday events, past experience and other topics
 - iii. Ask questions about the possibility of alternatives or further development based on the available information
 - iv. Challenge the assumptions of a statement, theory, question, etc
 - b. Action verbs for thinking ranging from low level to high level

| Level | Action Verb |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ↑ ↓ Low | High |
| | Create, Develop, Hypothesize, Theorize, Generalize, Criticize, Justify, Evaluate, Reflect ... |
| | Apply, Relate, Explain, Analyze, Illustrate, Discuss, Compare, Contrast ... |
| | Summarize, Outline, Report, Describe, List, Identify ... |

¹ Adapted from EDC's Learning to Learn Network, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, at http://www.polyu.edu.hk/learn-to-learn/teacher/_contents/htm/fs_g1.htm .

Question asking in tutorial *When there are no questions...*

Hate to face complete silence when you are looking for a question from the class? The Question-asking Guide offers you a solution to this scenario.

Here is a sample instruction for students:

Instructions

Objectives of the exercise:

This activity serves a dual purpose: first to help you come up with thought-provoking questions for discussion in the tutorial; second to stimulate high order thinking through generating questions, as generating such questions necessitates thinking at such level.

In pairs or in threes:

1. Each person will set a question
2. Exchange questions among your partners to rate it.
3. Refer to the instructions on the worksheet (top right corner). You may also make up your own criteria.
4. Discuss in your group and upgrade them if needed
5. Discuss among yourselves the reasons of asking those questions
6. Hint: Why do you think it is important to ask this question? What implications would it lead to?

How will your questions be used:

Your teacher will invite you to share with the class your question and the reasons your group come up with. The question will serve as topics of discussion.

By doing this exercise, you will:

- ☺ Have better understanding of the topic in relation to topics
- ☺ Learn to generate questions that would stimulate thinking in yourself and others

Notes to teachers:

This method can also be used **in mass lectures** (Students sitting in a row can form groups of three or work together in pair). Since understanding the worksheet takes time, it is recommendable to have your students familiarise with the operation of the worksheet beforehand. This can be done through:

- Tutorials, i.e. use as the example suggests
- Spend 20 minutes or so at the beginning of a semester

There are many interesting ways for **sharing the questions** raised by students. For example:

- Ask students to write their questions on flipchart or large pieces of paper and post them on the walls
- Go around the class, ask each group to read out one question at a time, and you record it on the board

Tutorial preparation *Never fail to ask*

Formalise the preparation for tutorial by having students to prepare a question with the Guide. Collect the questions at the beginning and select from them topics for discussion. Ask students to share their opinions on the questions.

Here is a sample instruction for students:

Instructions

Objectives of the exercise:

A good way to make tutorials productive is to raise questions for discussion. This worksheet provides guidelines to help you come up with thought-provoking questions for this purpose.

For the preparation for the tutorial, you are required to:

1. Write a question(s) about the topic on the worksheet or on a blank sheet of paper
2. Refer to the instructions on the worksheet and upgrade the question(s) as needed
3. Do aim for a reasonably high level question.
4. Write down the reasons of asking this question(s)

Hint: Why do you think it is important to ask this question? What implications would it lead to?

And in the tutorial...

Your worksheet will be collected at the beginning of the tutorial to form a pool of discussion topics. Or, you will be asked to present your questions and the reasons you come up with, which then will be used as the topic for discussion.

By doing this exercise, you will:

- ☺ Have better understanding of the topic in relation to topics
- ☺ Learn to generate questions that would stimulate thinking in yourself and others

Assignment *Free questions, good questions*

Allowing the freedom of deciding the question is a good way to motivate students in doing their assignments. This practice is not unusual for assignment and fairly common for project. However, how could the students be sure of the quality of their questions? One way is to use the Question-asking Guide to fine-tune the question.

Here is a sample instruction for students:

Instructions

Objectives of the exercise:

The objectives of this exercise are to generate a question that is of your interest which can be used as a question for the assignment / project.

In this assignment, you are required to:

5. Set a question for the topic _____
6. Evaluate and fine-tune your question following the instructions on the worksheet
7. Write a few sentences about the refinement/improvement you have made to your original question. Pay special attention to whether the question is of a breadth and depth appropriate for the assignment.
8. Consult your teacher on the appropriateness of the question for the assignment / project before finalising it
9. Proceed with your assignment / project using the finalised question

Date of submission:

30-03-2011 (Please hand in the worksheet along with your answer)

By doing this assignment, you will:

- ☺ Develop the ability to monitor the quality of your own thinking
- ☺ Achieve deeper thinking and understanding of the topic
- ☺ Enhance your ability and confidence in raising constructive questions

Comment and feedback

You might want to give some feedback and comments on the questions. Regarding this, we have the following suggestions:

- Keep the comment positive
- Include a question that takes the question one step further (e.g. “Your question makes me wonder...”)

Question-Asking Guide

Topic: _____

| Question | Criteria | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------|--|
| <p>Example – Topic: Impact of US economy on HK Q: How would the rise in US interest rate affect HK stock market? *E: To answer this question, one has to understand the relationship between interest rate and stock price and apply that to the situation described. This requires quite a high level of processing, while it does not go beyond the topic.</p> | <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1005 481 1117 548">Recalling information</td> <td data-bbox="1117 481 1404 548">Integrating information</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="1005 560 1404 582">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1005 604 1117 672">Focusing on the topic</td> <td data-bbox="1117 604 1404 672">Going beyond the topic</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="1005 683 1404 705">_____</td> </tr> </table> | Recalling information | Integrating information | _____ | | Focusing on the topic | Going beyond the topic | _____ | |
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| Recalling information | Integrating information | | | | | | | | |
| _____ | | | | | | | | | |
| Focusing on the topic | Going beyond the topic | | | | | | | | |
| _____ | | | | | | | | | |

*: Evaluation of the question