Building Understanding Through Questions

The questions asked by both teachers and students can shape the quality of learning and discussion.

Clarifying questions help ensure shared understanding. | **Probing questions** push thinking deeper.

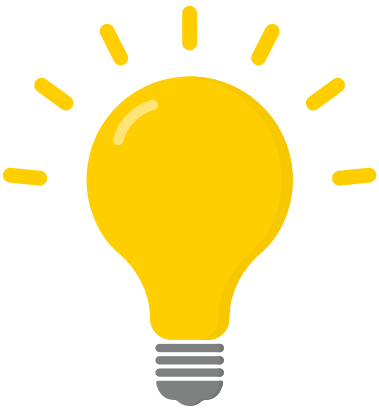
Using both intentionally leads to clearer communication and more meaningful conversations.

Clarifying Questions



Clarifying Questions are used to **gather more information** and ensure a shared understanding of the facts.

- They are **direct**, often factual, and help to **clear up any confusion** about what was said or done.
- Think of them as questions that ask **who, what, where, when, and how**.
- Their goal is to make sure **everyone is on the same page**.



Probing Questions

Probing Questions are used to **encourage deeper thinking**, challenge assumptions, and explore reasoning.

- These questions are **open-ended** and designed to help someone **think more critically** about their own ideas or strategies.
- They often start with **why** or ask for **justification, evidence, or alternative** perspectives.
- Their goal is to **push thinking** beyond the surface level.

Student Inquiry Stems

These stems empower students to take an active role in their learning, seek clarity, and engage in meaningful discussions with their peers.

🔍 Clarifying Sentence Stems
(for when you need to understand more)

- What I heard you say was...
- Could you show me what you mean when you say...?
- Can you explain that in a different way?
- I'm not sure I understand, can you tell me more about...?
- I'm a little confused about the part where...
- So, are you saying that...? (Used to confirm understanding)
- What did you do first?

💡 Probing Sentence Stems
(for when you want to think deeper)

- I agree with your answer because...
- I chose this way because...
- I respectfully disagree with your answer because...
- How did you know your answer was correct?
- Why did you choose that strategy?
- Is there another way to solve this?
- What if we tried...?
- My strategy is similar to yours because...
- I reached a different answer because I...

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Teacher Inquiry Stems

These stems help teachers facilitate discussions, assess student understanding, and encourage students to explain and justify their thinking without giving away the answer.

🔍 Clarifying Sentence Stems
(to understand a student's thinking)

- Tell me more about what you did.
- What I hear you saying is...
- Walk me through your steps.
- What do you mean when you say the word '____'?
- Can you draw a picture or use a tool to show me?
- What have you tried so far?
- So, you started by...

💡 Probing Sentence Stems
(to push for deeper understanding)

- Why does that work?
- Is that always true?
- Can you prove your answer is correct?
- Is there a more efficient strategy?
- How is your strategy different from [another student's]?
- What would happen if you changed...?
- Can you convince us that your solution is right?
- What was the most challenging part of this problem for you?

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Student Inquiry Stems

Directions for Use: Print, laminate, cut out, and keep on a ring so students can refer to these inquiry stems during classroom dialogue.



What I heard you say was...



Could you explain that in a different way?



I'm not sure I understand, can you tell me more about...



I'm still a little confused about the part where...

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Could you show me what you mean when you say...



So, are you saying that...

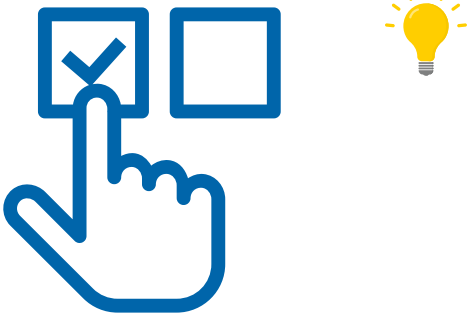
(confirming understanding)



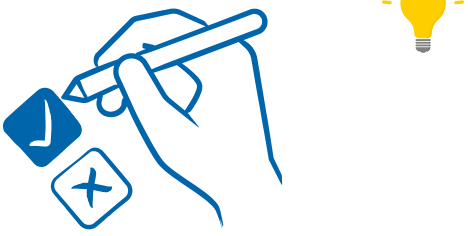
What did you do first?



I agree with your answer because...

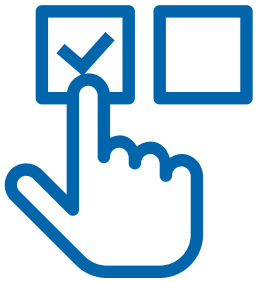


I chose this way because...



How did you know your answer was correct?

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Is there another way to solve this?



Why did you choose that strategy?



What if we tried...?



My strategy is similar to yours because...



I reached a different answer because I...

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Teacher Inquiry Stems

Directions for Use: Print, laminate, cut out, and keep on a ring to refer to during classroom dialogue.

Tell me more about what you did.

What I hear you saying is...

Walk me through your steps.

What do you mean when you say the word '____'?

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Can you draw a picture or use a tool to show me?

What have you tried so far?

So, you started by...

Why does that work?

Is that always true?

Can you prove your answer is correct?

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Is there a more efficient strategy?

How is your strategy different from [another student's]?

What would happen if you changed...?

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