

Effective questioning techniques

The effectiveness of questioning in teacher-student interactions can be significantly enhanced by a few basic techniques:

- 1. Pose the question first, *before* asking a student to respond.**
 - When you call on a student before posing the question, the rest of the class is less likely to listen to the question, much less formulate a response.
 - Posing the question before identifying someone to respond lets students know they will be held accountable and should be prepared to answer *every* question.
- 2. Allow plenty of “think time” by waiting at least 7-10 seconds before expecting students to respond.**
 - Ask students to refrain from responding until you ask for a volunteer or identify someone.
 - Since most teachers wait only 1-3 seconds before expecting a response, the increased wait time can seem like an eternity and feel very uncomfortable at first.
 - To help students adjust to an extended wait time, use the time to repeat and rephrase the question; also suggest that students use the time to write down the responses they compose.
- 3. Make sure you give all students the opportunity to respond rather than relying on volunteers.**
 - Create a system to help you keep track of who you call on, so you can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to contribute.
 - If you call on a student who is not ready to respond or does not know the answer, allow the student to “pass” and then give him/her another opportunity later.
- 4. Hold students accountable by expecting, requiring and facilitating their participation and contributions.**
 - NEVER answer your own questions! If the students know you will give them the answers after a few seconds of silence anyway, what is their incentive?
 - Do NOT accept “I don’t know” for an answer:
 - a. Allow additional think time, if necessary, by moving on and then coming back to the student for a response later;
 - b. Offer hints or suggestions to guide students in formulating quality responses;
 - c. If a student is unable or unwilling to formulate a response, then offer two or more options and let the student choose one.
- 5. Establish a safe atmosphere for risk taking by guiding students in the process of learning from their mistakes.**
 - ALWAYS “dignify” incorrect responses by saying something positive about students’ efforts; public embarrassment only confirms apprehensions about class participation.
 - When students make mistakes, build their confidence and trust by asking follow-up questions to help them self-correct and achieve success.
 - Admit your own mistakes and “think aloud” examples of a reflection process that demonstrates increased awareness, new insights, concept clarification etc.