

# How do I ask questions effectively in class?

## Topic focus

- phrasing questions in class discussions
- encouraging student responses in class

## Topic outcomes

- you will become familiar with a range of question types
- you will identify how you can structure a lesson around a series of questions
- you will become familiar with using a questioning technique which suits your teaching style and your students' needs

*'I ask questions but I don't seem to be able to generate worthwhile discussions. When I try to get a discussion going in class, the students are reluctant to contribute. I can ask a question and nobody responds. And when someone does offer an answer, it often seems to be quite short. Either this or one or two students always seem to dominate. It really becomes frustrating after a while.'*

### Take a moment to reflect on this issue.

What challenges does this pose for *your* teaching? .....

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## Possible solutions

1. Prepare a class around a series of questions beginning with low level 'knowledge' type of questions and building up to more 'analysis' and 'evaluation' questions.
2. When designing questions before the class, try to design them in sets, so that when you ask the first question, and you manage to elicit a response from a student, ask a follow up question which requires the student to expand on or justify what they originally said.
3. By asking questions based on the students' own personal experiences and knowledge you will be much more likely to draw a response.
4. Build in enough 'wait time' between asking your question and getting a response from students - up to 20-25 seconds if necessary.
5. Use a series of overhead transparencies, each with an increasingly difficult question.
6. Use small groups in class to discuss a set of questions related to the topic, and including a progression through Bloom's cognitive domains. The class when brought together again will be better able to discuss the topic.
7. Try asking questions 'in the round', by giving each student in turn the opportunity to either respond or 'pass'.
8. Occasionally towards the end of a class, simply ask 'what did you learn from this activity' - build in 'wait time' though.

