

DEVELOPING
QUESTIONING
STRATEGIES

Asking in Class

The purpose of this activity is to develop confidence and skill to ask questions in class and establish a list of useful questioning strategies.

Activity

1. Ask students to suggest times when they need to ask questions in front of the class. List their responses on the board. For example, when I lose track of the lesson; when I need something that I have left at home; when I don't understand the instructions; when I don't know what to do next.
2. Share a personal experience that illustrates the emotions one might feel in a similar situation, for example, embarrassment, anxiety, or fear. Encourage students to share their experiences of these emotions.
3. Add to the list on the board if necessary.
4. Develop questions that could be used in the situations listed.
5. Record these questions on a large piece of paper and display in the room for future reference.

Sample situation and questions

Losing track of the lesson:

Q: I remember this part but . . . can you tell me what I missed, please?

Q: I understand this part . . . but can someone please help with . . . ?

Extension/Variation

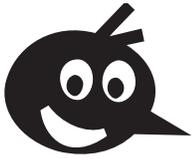
- Ask students to list the negative and positive responses, when questions are asked in class. Negative responses might include looks, murmurs, or impatient responses. Positive responses might include nods, murmurs of agreement, and comments such as, "Yes, me too." or "That would be helpful."
- A small group of students can draw up questions to use in other public situations, such as meetings with older students or teachers, or in public places such as a library or a restaurant.

Student reflection

- This has helped me to . . .
- I will use this strategy when . . .

Teacher reflection

- This activity was of benefit to all/most/some/a few of the class. Identify specific students who may benefit from this strategy. Note instances when they will be encouraged to use it.



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Seek and Find

The purpose of this activity is to develop effective questioning strategies for seeking information in a public place. This activity involves role play.

Activity

1. Organize random groups of four or five students using a numbering-off method.
2. Explain that the random method helps us to work with people who are new to us, and that this activity is designed to help us develop skills used when dealing with people who are not well known to us.
3. Set the scene. Two members of the group are young people who are lost, while the others are adults the students may encounter. Suggest a number of places that are relevant to the students' experience; for example, in a large school, in the city, at a hockey game, at a concert, in a shopping centre, at the zoo.
4. Explain the task. Each group is to create and perform a short play that demonstrates the use of polite, relevant questions that may help the lost students gain the information they require from the adults.
5. Explain the rules. Only polite questions are answered. Adults must respond to the question but do not have to answer it fully or correctly. Adults can ask questions in return, which the lost students must answer.
6. Present the role plays and ask the audience to listen carefully and note whether the rules are obeyed.
7. Conclude with student reflection (see below).

Extension/Variation

Students can change the scene and adapt the rules. Have students role-play a student seeking information from a busy adult. The student must find the information by asking up to five different, polite questions. The adult must act aloof and preoccupied. The asker must persist in order to obtain the information. Eventually the adult must provide the information.

Student reflection

- I feel confident about asking questions in public because . . .
- The most effective question is . . . because . . .

Teacher reflection

- To what extent do students require further practice in effective questioning skills?
- Where can these strategies be incorporated into other key learning areas?