

Questioning Techniques for Classroom Interaction

2-hour lesson plan + classroom-ready activities

Display vs Referential

Bloom's Taxonomy

Open + Probing

Learning focus: move students from short answers to deeper thinking.



Your teaching should include clear input, simple instructions, suitable wait time, and a question to check understanding.

After mini lesson, classmates will give brief feedback using the checklist:

- Was the teacher talk clear, short, supportive, interactive?
- Did the teacher allow enough wait time?
- Did the teacher use CCQ?

Task

Teach classmates how to complete a 2-minute activity. Include input, instructions, wait time, and checking.

Feedback

Peers use checklist: clear, short, supportive, interactive, wait time.

By the end of 2 hours, students can...

Learning outcomes for teacher-questioning practice

Identify

Distinguish display questions from referential questions in classroom examples.

Upgrade

Transform closed or low-level questions into open, higher-order questions using Bloom's Taxonomy.

Probe

Use probing techniques to extend answers, clarify reasoning, and encourage evidence.

Interact

Facilitate a short Hot Seat discussion using respectful follow-up questions.

Reflect

Evaluate question quality using a simple classroom interaction checklist.

2-Hour Lesson Plan

Suggested timing for a 120-minute session

0–10	Warm-up: Question Storm	Students list teacher questions they remember.
10–25	Mini-lecture 1	Display vs referential questions + examples.
25–40	Group Discussion	Classify questions and discuss teacher purpose.
40–60	Mini-lecture 2	Bloom’s Taxonomy + higher-order questioning.
60–75	Mini-lecture 3	Open-ended questions + probing techniques.
75–100	Question Transformation Workshop	Groups rewrite weak questions into stronger ones.
100–115	Hot Seat Activity	One student answers; peers ask probing questions.
115–120	Exit Ticket	Write one question you will use in your classroom.

Why questioning matters

Questions shape how much students think, speak, and participate



Good questions do three jobs

1. Check understanding
2. Open interaction
3. Develop thinking

Weak questions often...

- ask for only one word
- have only one correct answer
- stop discussion too quickly

Teacher goal

Ask fewer automatic questions and more purposeful questions.

Core idea: question design changes classroom interaction.

Display vs Referential Questions

The difference is the purpose, not only the grammar

Display Question

The teacher already knows the answer.

Purpose: check recall, vocabulary, facts, or comprehension.

Example: “What is the past tense of go?”

Referential Question

The teacher does not know the student’s answer.

Purpose: invite opinions, experience, reasoning, or personal connection.

Example: “When was a time you had to change your plan?”

Both are useful. The best teachers choose the type intentionally.

Use display questions to check accuracy quickly.

Use referential questions to create authentic communication.

Balance both types during a lesson.

Think, Pair, Share: What kind of question is it?

Activity 1 • 15 minutes

Instructions

1. Read each question.
2. Mark D = Display or R = Referential.
3. Discuss: What does the teacher want students to do?

1. What is the main character's name?

D / R

2. How would you feel in this situation?

D / R

3. Is this sentence correct?

D / R

4. Why do you think the author ended the story this way?

D / R

5. What does "responsible" mean?

D / R

6. Which school rule would you change? Why?

D / R

Bloom's Taxonomy for Questioning

Move from recall to deeper thinking

Teaching tip

Start with lower-level questions when students need support. Then move upward with “why,” “how,” “what evidence,” and “what would happen if...?”

Create

design, produce, propose

Evaluate

judge, justify, defend

Analyze

compare, infer, organize

Apply

use, demonstrate, solve

Understand

explain, summarize, classify

Remember

list, define, identify

Classroom aim

A good discussion usually includes several levels, not only the top level.

Reading Example: Mobile Phones in Class

Read first. Then use the text to practise different levels of questioning.

Should Students Use Mobile Phones in Class?

Mobile phones are now a common part of students' daily lives. In the classroom, they can be useful learning tools. Students can quickly search for information, use dictionaries, take photographs of notes, and join online quizzes. Phones may also help shy students participate through digital polls or chat-based activities.

However, mobile phones can also distract learners. Messages, games, and social media may reduce attention and interrupt group work. Some students may use unreliable websites or copy answers without understanding them. In addition, not every student owns the same type of device or has affordable internet access.

For these reasons, some teachers ban phones completely, while others allow them only for specific learning tasks. A clear classroom agreement may be the most balanced solution: students can use phones when the teacher gives permission, but they must put them away during explanations, discussions, and tests.

Before discussion

- 1 Silent reading**
Underline one benefit and one concern.
- 2 Pair check**
Compare the main idea with a partner.
- 3 Evidence hunt**
Circle one detail that supports each side.
- 4 Be ready**
Answer using evidence from the passage.

Discuss the Passage Through Six Questions

Work in groups. Move from simple recall to deeper thinking.

1

Remember

What are two ways phones can support learning?

2

Understand

Why do some teachers worry about mobile phones?

3

Apply

What English-learning activity could a teacher ask students to do using their mobile phones?

4

Analyze

How are the benefits and problems different? Which issue is most serious?

5

Evaluate

Should mobile phones be allowed in class? Defend your answer with evidence.

6

Create

Design three classroom rules for responsible phone use.

Discussion rule: give a complete answer, refer to the passage, and ask one follow-up question.

The follow-up question helps the speaker:

- explain the answer more clearly;
- give a reason or example;
- provide evidence from the passage;
- develop the idea further.
- It should connect directly to what the first student said.

Example discussion**Main question**

What are two ways phones can support learning?

Student A's answer

Phones can help students search for information and use online dictionaries.

Student B's follow-up question

Can you give an example of how an online dictionary could help an English learner?

Student A's extended answer

An online dictionary can show the meaning, pronunciation, and example sentences for a new word.

Example: One topic, six question levels

Topic: Using mobile phones in class

Remember What is one classroom rule about mobile phones?

Understand Can you explain why some teachers limit phone use?

Apply How would you use a phone to support learning English?

Analyze What are the advantages and disadvantages of phone use in class?

Evaluate Should phones be allowed during group work? Justify your answer.

Create Design a fair phone policy for university students.

Open-ended questions

Questions that allow more than one possible answer

Closed

“Did you like the story?”

Answer: Yes / No

Open

“What part of the story was most meaningful to you, and why?”

Answer: personal + explanation

Stronger opening words

How...?

Why...?

What might happen if...?

In what ways...?

What evidence supports...?

Open-ended questions invite students to explain, connect, and think aloud.

Avoid asking too many “Do you...?” or “Is it...?” questions.

Give students time to think before answering.

Use pair discussion before whole-class answers for confidence.

Probing techniques

Follow-up questions that make thinking clearer

Clarify

“What do you mean by...?”

Evidence

“What makes you say that?”

Reason

“Why do you think so?”

Example

“Can you give an example?”

Extend

“Can you add one more idea?”

Alternative

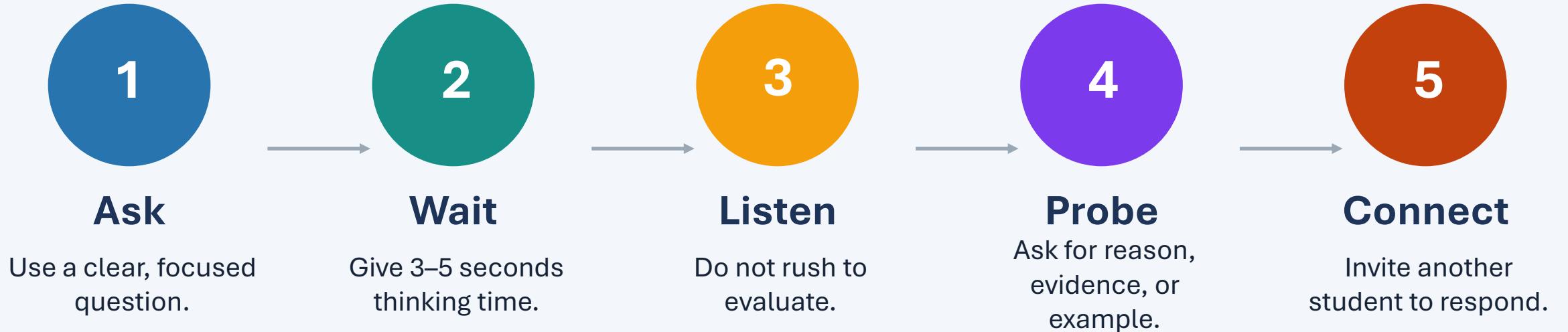
“Does anyone have a different view?”

Teacher move: ask → wait → listen → probe → connect.

- **type of inquiry used to dig deeper into a topic, gather additional information, clarify responses, or encourage elaboration from the respondent.**
- **Unlike closed-ended questions that yield concise answers and**
- **open-ended questions that invite freeform responses,**
- **probing questions are strategically crafted to explore specific aspects of a subject.**
- **aim to uncover hidden details, motivations, emotions, or nuances that may not be immediately apparent.**

A simple questioning sequence

Use this pattern during classroom interaction



Useful teacher sentence

“Take a few seconds to think. Then share with your partner first.”

Question Transformation Workshop

Activity 2 • 25 minutes

Group task

Transform weak questions into stronger classroom questions. Each group chooses one topic and writes 6 upgraded questions.

Rules

1. Keep the lesson topic clear.
2. Change closed to open.
3. Move at least 2 questions higher in Bloom's Taxonomy.
4. Add at least 2 probing follow-ups.

Output

A mini question bank: 3 open-ended questions + 3 probing follow-ups.

Share

Each group presents their best question and explains why it is stronger.



Workshop examples: weak → stronger

Use these models before groups begin

Is the answer correct?



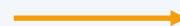
How did you decide that answer is correct?

Do you understand the text?



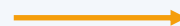
Which part of the text is clearest or most difficult? Why?

What is photosynthesis?



How would you explain photosynthesis to a younger student?

Did the character make a mistake?



What evidence shows that the character made a good or bad decision?

Hot Seat Activity

Activity 4 • 15 minutes



How it works

1. One student sits in the Hot Seat.
2. The class asks open-ended questions.
3. The Hot Seat student answers.
4. Peers ask probing follow-ups.
5. Teacher observes question quality.

Suggested topic

“A challenge in learning English”
“A memorable classroom experience”

**Reminder: Questions must be respectful, relevant,
and clear.**

Hot Seat: Question Language Bank

Sentence starters for supportive interaction

Opening

Can you tell us about...?

What was the most difficult part of...?

Clarifying

What do you mean by...?

Could you explain that in another way?

Probing

Why do you think that happened?

What evidence or example can you give?

Extending

What would you do differently next time?

How could this idea help other students?

Question stems by teaching purpose

Choose the stem that matches your lesson aim

Check understanding

What is the main idea?
Can you summarize the rule?

Invite experience

Have you ever...?
What would you do if...?

Develop reasoning

Why do you think...?
What evidence supports...?

Compare ideas

How is A different from B?
Which idea is stronger? Why?

Encourage reflection

What did you learn from this task?
What will you improve next time?

Common mistakes in classroom questioning

And better teacher moves

Mistake 1

Asking many questions at once.

Better: ask one clear question.

Mistake 2

Answering your own question too quickly.
Better: use wait time.

Mistake 3

Only calling on strong students.

Better: pair first, then whole class.

Mistake 4

Using “Any questions?” at the end only.

Better: check understanding during the lesson.

Mistake 5

Treating wrong answers as failure.

Better: probe and build from the answer.

Mistake 6

Asking questions that are too difficult without support.
Better: scaffold with examples.

DON'T JUST TELL STORIES BUT ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS!

Using Questions During Storytelling

- Helps children pay attention
- Builds thinking skills
- Encourages participation
- Makes the story more interactive and fun

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| ➔ | 1. Predictive Questions | ➔ | 2. Vocabulary Check Questions |
| ➔ | 3. Observational Questions | ➔ | 4. Reflective Questions |



WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT?!

(questioning techniques)
(interactive talk)

- Dialogic reading (Discussion/Conversation during reading)
- Open-ended questions
- WHY-HOW questions



Language development
Cognitive development
Significant literacy development

1. PREDICTIVE QUESTIONS

- Before & During the Story

What does this name tell you about the picture?
Based on the title,
what do you think this story is about?

“What do you think will happen next?”

What do you see from this picture?
What do the children see in this picture?

2. VOCABULARY CHECK QUESTIONS

- simple questions teachers use to check whether children understand new words in the story.



“What is this called?” / “what is this?”

“Can you point to the tree?”

“Do you see the hat?”

3. OBSERVATIONAL QUESTIONS



- Encourage children to look closely at the pictures, characters, and details in the story.
- Help develop attention, visual thinking, and emotional awareness. (develop observational skills, and an understanding of character emotions)

"What do you see in this picture?"

"What color is this?"

What is the character doing?"

How does feel?"

4. REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- Help children think about their own feelings, experiences, and opinions after listening to a story.
- Encourage thinking beyond the picture and connecting the story to real life. (helps children connect the story to real life and develop a deeper understanding.)



“Which part made you happy?”

“Have you ever felt like the character?”

“If you were the character, what would you do?”

CONCLUSIONS

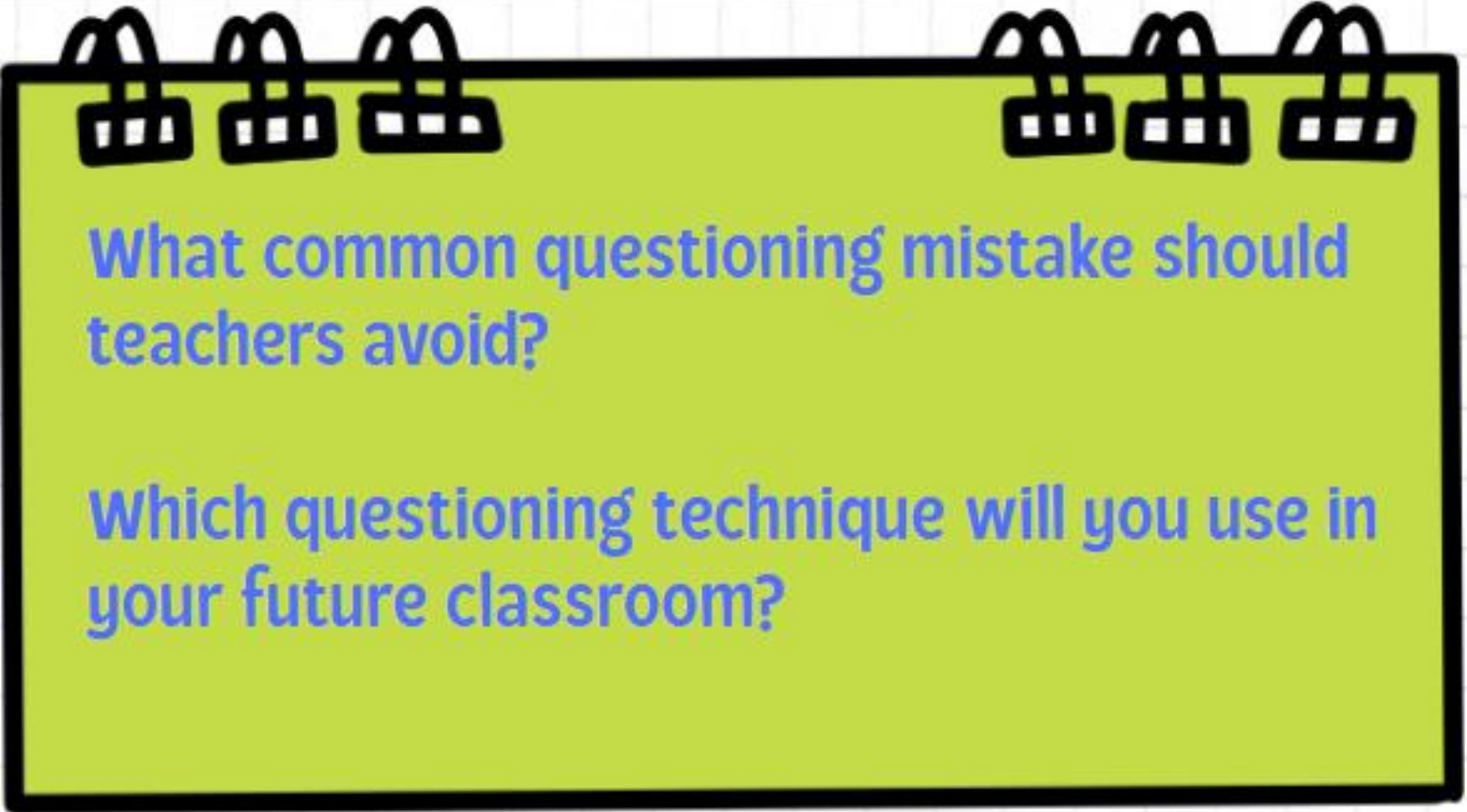
WRAP-UP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN A DISPLAY
QUESTION AND A
REFERENTIAL QUESTION?

WHY DO OPEN-ENDED
QUESTIONS USUALLY
PRODUCE LONGER ANSWERS?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A
PROBING QUESTION?

WHICH TYPE OF QUESTION IS
MOST DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO
CREATE?



What common questioning mistake should teachers avoid?

Which questioning technique will you use in your future classroom?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION