What’s in a question?
Effective Questioning Strategies.

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Why Ask Questions?

• Questions allow us to:
  ➢ … access information
  ➢ … analyze information
  ➢ … draw sound conclusions

• Good questions stimulate thinking and creativity
Asking Questions

• The goal is to have the questions reside with the learner

• “The ability to think - to be a lifelong seeker and integrator of new knowledge - is based on the ability to ask and consider important questions.” (Richetti & Sheerin, 1999)
Types of Questions

- Closed Questions
  - …have a limited number of acceptable responses or “right answers”

- Open Questions
  - … those that can be explored further
Closed Questions

• Fact-based, or based on previously-learned information
• Promote limited discussion and interaction
• May be factual recall; may require convergent thinking (more analytical)
Types of Closed Questions

- **Memory Recall**
  - Useful in checking information retention and determining the knowledge base of the participants.
  - Example: According to the Surgeon General, what is the ideal blood pressure range for 45-year-old man? A 45-year-old woman?
Types of Closed Questions

- **Convergent (a.k.a., Synthesis/Analysis)**
  - Represents the analysis of given or remembered data...
  - Focuses on solving a problem or putting several pieces of data together...the learner has to reason, using given or remembered data.
  - The participant becomes a problem solver in which the task is to apply the proper operations at the proper time.
  - Example: “What aspects of wetlands make them susceptible to non-point pollutants?”
Open Questions

- Those that promote discussion and interaction
- Do not have a single “right” answer
- Stimulate learner thinking and encourage ideas, speculation, and the formation of hypotheses...
  - allow learners to generate their own questions (REMEMBER: have the questions reside with the learner)
Types of Open Questions

- **Evaluative**
  - Asks the learner to use judgement, value, and choice, and is characterized by its judgmental quality
  - Example: “Discuss some things you think need to be done to improve environmental literacy in California?”
Types of Open Questions

- **Divergent**
  - Provides the opportunity to consider many different systems and try out many answers
  - Allows the opportunity for creativity and imagination
  - Everyone can participate at her/his own level and, since the response depends on the viewpoint of the individual, there are no “wrong” answers
Types of Open Questions

- Divergent
  - Examples:
    - “Compare the fitness levels of children who…”
    - “Explain different ways in which pet overpopulation…”
    - “Discuss opportunities to improve biodiversity…”
How Do I Know if My Questions are Open or Closed?

• Check your vocabulary:
  
  - Questions that begin with who, what, when, where, and name, and sometimes how and why tend to be closed questions.

  - Questions that use the terms discuss, interpret, explain, evaluate, compare, if, or what if, are indicative of questions that can be explored further.
Question Variety

• What’s the benefit of asking closed questions? When are they appropriate?
• What skills do open questions help students develop?
“...and listen to the Sounds of Silence.”

-Paul Simon

- **Misconception**: The more questions I ask, the more curious the students will be. **Actuality**: The more questions a teacher asks, the fewer students ask.

- **Misconception**: If students don’t respond immediately, ask another question. Avoid that uncomfortable silence. **Actuality**: *Wait time* is important. Student confidence increases; the number of questions students ask increases.