

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS IN DISCUSSIONS AND EXAMS

If we analyze of the types of questions we can ask, we see that not all questions elicit the same type of thinking in students. A number of theorists have organized intellectual activity into levels; one of the most well known of these organizational strategies was authored by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 and is known as *Bloom's Taxonomy*. While questions which elicit lower level thinking are an important part of teaching, they are useless unless they build toward questions which help students develop higher order thinking skills. Focus your attention on questions which require Level 3, Level 4, Level 5, and Level 6 thinking.

Level	Description	What We Do at This Level	Examples of Questions
1	Knowledge: Exhibit memory of previously learned material by recalling facts, terms, basic concepts and answers.	arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state	"What is...?" "How would you describe...?" "Why did...?" "How would your show...?"
2	Comprehension: Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas.	classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, summarize, translate	"What facts or ideas show...?" "How would you compare...?" "How would your classify...?" "Can you explain what is happening...?"
3	Application: Solve problems to new situations by applying acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way.	apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write	"What would result if...?" "What facts would you select to show...?" "What approach would you use to...?" "How would you use...?"
4	Analysis: Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations.	analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.	"What inference can you make...?" "What is the relationship between...?" "What evidence can you find...?" "What things justify...?"
5	Synthesis: Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions.	arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.	"What could be changed to improve...?" "How would you test...?" "What way would you design...?" "What outcome would you predict for...?"
6	Evaluation: Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.	appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose compare, defend estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate	"How could you select...?" "How could you prove...?" "How would you prioritize...?" "What information would you use to support...?"

While questions which elicit lower level thinking are an important part of teaching, they are useless unless they build toward questions which help students develop higher order thinking skills. Focus your attention on questions which require Level III, Level IV, Level V, and Level VI thinking.