

QUESTIONING

Teachers ask up to two questions every minute, up to 400 a day!

Questioning accounts for up to a third of all teaching time second only to time spent on explanation!

Most questions are answered in less than a second (that's the average time teachers allow between posing a question and accepting an answer, throwing it to someone else or answering it themselves)!

Research indicates that if you increase the wait time you improve the number and quality of responses (3 seconds for a basic question and 10 seconds for a high order question)!

Why do teachers ask so many questions?

Many questions are procedural – not learning – based (e.g. *have you finished yet?*) Questioning remains a key means of transfer of knowledge. It is commonly believed that questioning leads to more effective and more enjoyable learning than simple explanation alone.

Questions can:

- help pupils to reflect on information
- help commit learning to memory
- develop thinking skills
- encourage discussion
- stimulate new ideas
- enable teachers to determine how much a class understands
- enable them to pitch lessons at an appropriate level
- be an important tool in managing the classroom
- help draw individuals into a lesson and keep them involved
- give a clear message that pupils are expected to be active participants in the learning process.

Questions typically come as low order (requiring children to remember facts). They tend to be closed with a single right answer and are likely to begin with what, who, when or where. The high order questions require thought and tend to start with how, why or which. These tend to be open offering a range of alternative answers.

Teachers probably ask too many low order questions as they keep the lesson moving. It is believed by some that questions simply testing recall tend to make the children who don't know the answer feel like failures.

Having the self-discipline to keep quiet for a time having posed a question is all you need to get the children thinking. A good idea is to ask a question at the end of the lesson and ask for the answers in the next lesson, allowing for discussion as well as thought.

Questions can intimidate children and is often used as a classroom control technique. Some children are simply afraid of providing a silly answer which leads to 'peer fear'. Always asking those who are likely to know the answer may keep a lesson moving but provide a poor way of developing thinking skills. Avoiding the 'hands up' approach to providing answers is one way forward but still tends to only involve a small fraction of the class. A better approach is to get the class to work together to

tease out answers to more challenging questions. This leads to a more comfortable and cooperative environment where it isn't always the quickest and most confident pupil who makes most contributions.

Asking good questions is the basis for becoming an effective learner. Holding back on a new topic until the class has worked out what questions they would like answered is one approach. Asking pupils to set tests at the end of a topic for other children is another way, awarding marks for the quality of question rather than the answer.

Lower ability and younger children respond best to questions when given the opportunity to examine material. Higher ability children prefer to ask questions before seeing the material.

It is a good idea to have your questioning style videoed for your own perusal Do you only use the same children and do you show an active interest in the question and its answers.