

Asking Effective Questions

What are the benefits of asking effective questions? The impact of asking effective questions can:

- Foster critical thinking skills.
- Enhance creativity.
- Strengthen relationships.
- Establish trust.
- Encourage good listening.
- Help you become invested in the problem.
- Encourage others to ask questions.
- Spark lively and productive discussions.
- Open your mind to other opinions or beliefs.
- Protect you from making mistakes.
- Make solutions more effective.
- Help you make better decisions and choices.

Types of Effective Questions:

Questions for Clarification	Questions that Probe Assumptions	Questions the Probe Reasons and Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean by ___? • What is your main point? • Is your point ___ or ___? • How does this relate to this problem/discussion? • Could you give me an example? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you assuming? • What is John assuming? • What could we assume instead? • All of your reasoning seems to depend on the idea that ___. Could you explain? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be an example? • What other information do you need? • How does that apply to this case? • Can someone else give evidence to support that view?
Questions that Probe Implications and Consequences	Questions about Viewpoints or Perspectives	Questions about the Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you implying by that? • What effect would that have? • When you say ___ are you implying ___? • Would that necessarily happen or possibly happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would ___ ask this question differently? • Can you tell me how you think this might work out? • Would you view the situation as ___ or ___? • What is your thinking on the matter? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you rephrase the question? • Are you asking ___ or ___? • Why do you ask that question? • Can you tell me how that question relates to ___?

Remember, communication is a two-way process. Effective questioning requires it be combined with practicing good listening skills.

The above table has been adapted from:
Paul, Richard, Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World, 1993.