

A Sample of Effective Questions

Questions for Clarification	Questions that Probe Assumptions	Questions that Probe Reasons and Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean by? • What is your main point? • How does _____ relate to _____? • Could you put that another way? • Is your basis point _____ or _____? • What do you think is the main issue here? • Let me see if I understand you; do you mean _____ or _____? • How does this relate to this issue/problem/discussion? • What do you, Mike, mean by this remark? What do you take Mike to mean by his remark? • Jane, can you summarize in your own words what Richard said? . . . Richard, is this what you meant? • Could you give me an example? • Would this be an example, . . . ? • Could you explain this further? • Would you say more about that? • Why do you say that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you assuming? • What is Jenny assuming? • What could we assume instead? • You seem to be assuming _____. Do I understand you correctly? • All of your reasoning depends on the idea that _____. Why have you based your reasoning on _____ instead of _____? • You seem to be assuming _____. How do you justify taking that for granted? • Is that always the case? Why do you think the assumption holds here? • Why would someone make that assumption? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be an example? • How do you know? • Why do you think that is true? • Do you have any evidence for that? • What difference does that make? • What are your reasons for saying that? • What other information do you need? • Could you explain your reasons to us? • Are these reasons adequate? • Why do you say that? • What led you to that belief? • How does that apply to this case? • What would change your mind? • But, is that good evidence for that belief? • Is there a reason to doubt that evidence? • Who is in a position to know that is true? • What would you say to someone who said that _____? • Can someone else give evidence to support that view? • By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion? • How could we find out if that is true?

The above table has been adapted from:

Paul, Richard, *Critical Thinking: How to Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World*, 1993.

A Sample of Effective Questions

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? • When you say _____, are you implying _____? • But, if that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why? • What effect would that have? • Would that necessarily happen or only possibly/probably happen? • What is an alternative? • If _____ and _____ are the case, then what might also be true? • If we say that _____ is ethical, how about _____? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we find out? What does this question assume? • What does this question assume? • Would _____ ask this question differently? • How could someone settle this question? • Can we break this question down at all? • Is this question clear? Do we understand it? • Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why? • Does this question ask us to evaluate something? What? • Do we all agree that this is the question? • To answer this question, what other questions must we answer first? • I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting this question. Is this the same as _____? • How would _____ state the issue? • Why is this issue important? • Is this the most important question, or is there an underlying question that is really the issue? 	

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