

Improving your Written Questioning Techniques

ProtocolNational
Leaders in FE Recruitment Process Outsourcing



Through the use of written questioning, tutors can gain an immediate insight into their learners' knowledge, allowing them to better tailor their teaching to meet individual learner needs.

To ensure that the information received from learner questioning represents a true picture of learner knowledge and not just their question decoding skills, questions to be used should be planned and carefully crafted.

Suggested approaches to improving written questioning techniques

- Consider the learning goals and compose questions that directly relate to these objectives. By writing questions that are specific to the purpose of the lesson, you can more effectively determine whether the objectives have been reached.
- Keep your wording clear. Overly complex vocabulary can make it difficult for learners to read and understand the question. Select simple words to ensure that you are measuring the learners' knowledge and not, instead, their vocabulary level.
- Write in simple sentences. Complex sentences can pose an unnecessary challenge to learners.
- Start with basic comprehension questions and gradually advance to more challenging queries. Begin with questions that require only recall, asking learners to respond with specific information. These questions serve as a warm-up. Gradually integrate more complex questions that require inference or synthesis.

- Select questions that do not require the learners to consult resources unless they have them at their desks. While answering questions, learners may not have the convenience of reviewing materials. If you must pose questions that require resources, ensure that all learners have a copy of the necessary resources.
- Type questions in large, clear font, especially if you plan to project these questions with an LCD projector. Make it easy for all learners to read the questions regardless of classroom placement by making the font easy to read in a large size.
- When using multiple choice questioning, review questions and remove any answers that are particularly close to the correct response. Response choices that are too similar to the correct answer can make learners feel as if they have been given a trick question.

Types of Questions

Open questions:

- are useful in getting learners to speak.
- can provide the tutor with a good deal of information.
- often begin with the words: What, Why, When, Who
- can be statements: "tell me about", "give me examples of".

Closed questions

These are questions that require a yes or no answer and are useful for checking facts. They should be used with care - too many closed questions can cause frustration and shut down conversation.

Specific questions

These are used to determine facts. For example "How much did you spend on that".

Probing questions

These check for more detail or clarification. Probing questions allow the tutor to explore specific areas. However care should be taken because they can easily make people feel they are being interrogated.

Hypothetical questions

These pose a theoretical situation in the future. For example, "What would you do if...?" These can be used to get learners to think of new situations. They are also be used in interviews to find out how people might cope with new situations.

Reflective questions

These can be used to reflect back to what you think a learner has said, to check understanding. These can also reflect the learner's feelings, which is useful in dealing with angry or difficult learners and for defusing emotional situations.

Leading questions

These are used to gain acceptance of the tutor's view - they are not useful in providing honest views and opinions. If it is said to someone 'you will be able to cope, won't you?' they may not like to disagree.

A series of different types of questions can be used to "funnel" information. This is a way of structuring information in sequence to explore a topic and to get to the heart of the issues.

e.g. the use of an open question, followed by a probing question, then a specific question and a reflective question.