

This Spotlight explores the common pitfalls or 'traps' that teachers often fall into with questioning, and suggests ways to avoid them.....

Not asking enough questions

- For every targeted question you ask, try to ask at least one follow up question



Talking for extended periods without asking a question

- For every minute of teacher talk, try to ask at least one question

Focusing too much on surface knowledge at the expense of deeper understanding

- In planning and delivering your lessons try to ensure there is a blend of both surface knowledge (recall) and deeper understanding (application) questions

Misunderstanding the relationship between closed and open questions

- Plan for a blend of both open and closed questions.



Allowing shouting out

- Shouting out is the enemy of whole-class thinking. If you allow students to shout out you are effectively signalling to the class that it doesn't matter who thinks about the question ~ "I just need an answer"

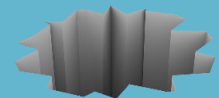
Lack of thinking time

- Always allow at least a few seconds of thinking time after asking a question



Not considering students' likely incorrect answers to preplanned questions

- As part of lesson planning, consider the mistakes and misconceptions that are likely to accompany preplanned questions, including how you intend to respond to these



Accepting incorrect or partially incorrect answers as correct

- Answers that are 'along the right lines' are rarely good enough to accept without doing something about. We need to push for perfect, make mistakes clear and explain why

Allowing students to opt out "I don't know"

- Stick with them and tease the answer out, or go back to them once they have had the opportunity to hear correct answers

Students not being expected to listen to and learn from one another

- For (at least?) every third targeted question, ask a collaborative follow up question



Students answering too quietly for other to hear

- Ask the student to repeat the question louder, or the teacher repeats their answer word for word

The teacher paraphrases an answer

- Avoid paraphrasing students' answers, if you do make changes, make this explicitly clear