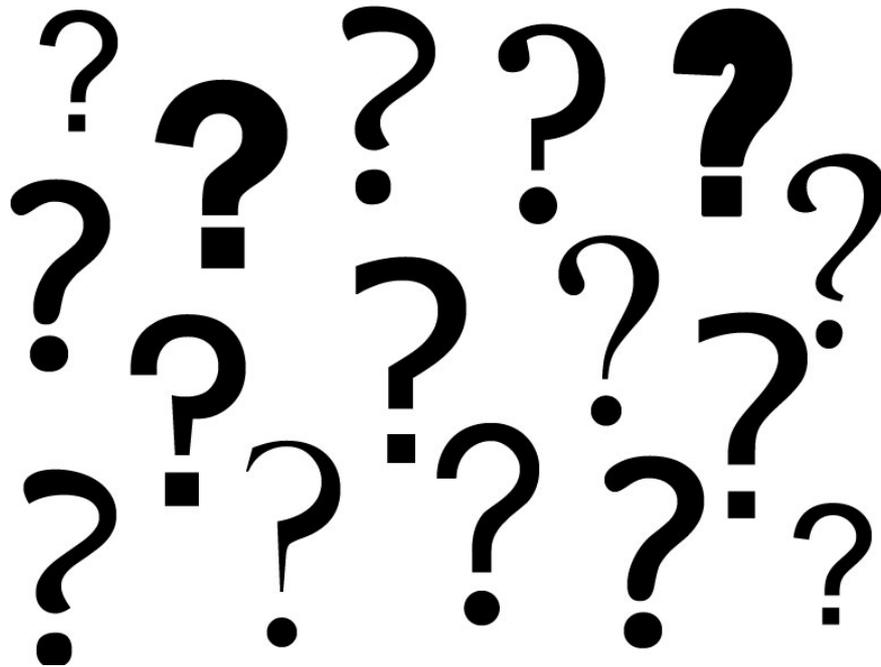


Introducing the Question Formulation Technique (QFT) Into Your Classroom

A Step-by-step Guide



About This Presentation

This power point presentation will walk you through all the steps needed and tips for teaching the Question Formulation Technique to your students.



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What is the Question Formulation Technique?

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) is a simple, but rigorous, step-by-step process designed to help students produce, improve, and strategize on how to use their questions.

The QFT allows students to practice three thinking abilities in one process: divergent, convergent and metacognitive thinking.



Using Student Questions

Students can use their questions for many purposes, including the following:

- ▶ Conduct Research
- ▶ Reports
- ▶ Conduct Experiments
- ▶ Independent Projects
- ▶ Write Papers/ Essays
- ▶ Group and Individual Projects
- ▶ Socratic Seminars/ Debates
- ▶ Prepare for Presentations/Interviews

Components of the Question Formulation Technique

1. The Question Focus (QFocus)
2. The Rules for Producing Questions
3. Producing Questions
4. Categorizing Questions
5. Prioritizing Questions
6. Next Steps
7. Reflection



1

The Question Focus (QFocus)



The Question Focus (QFocus)

A simple statement, a visual or aural aid to help students generate questions

- Created from curriculum content

You will need to design a QFocus every time you use the QFT



The Question Focus (QFocus)

The QFocus should be designed to accomplish one or more of the following:

- ▶ Generate Interest
- ▶ Stimulate New Thinking
- ▶ Introduce a Topic
- ▶ Set a Learning Agenda
- ▶ Deepen Comprehension
- ▶ Formative Assessment



The Question Focus (QFocus)

The QFocus should:

- ▶ be brief
- ▶ provoke or stimulate new lines of thinking

The QFocus should not:

- ▶ be a question

Tip: Use the criteria above for evaluating your QFocus



The Question Focus (QFocus)

To design your QFocus:

1. Define the QFocus purpose
2. Think about what students will do with the questions they produce
3. Generate several QFocus ideas
4. Check against criteria
5. Choose the idea that best meets your purpose and the criteria



The Question Focus (QFocus)

Tip: Use a simple QFocus to introduce your students to the question formulation process

- ▶ Once you have the QFocus you will be ready to guide your students through the QFT steps. Students will produce their own questions, improve them and strategize on how to use them.



2

Rules For Producing Questions



Rules For Producing Questions

- ▶ Let students know that you will soon be giving them a focus for asking questions
- ▶ But, before doing that, you will have them review and discuss the Rules for Producing Questions

Rules For Producing Questions

Introduce the Rules for Producing Questions:

- Ask as many questions as you can
- Do not stop to answer, judge or to discuss the questions
- Write down every question *exactly* as it is stated
- Change any statement into a question

TIP: Distribute or post the **Rules for Producing Questions**



Rules For Producing Questions

- Ask students to review the rules
- Ask students to reflect about one of these questions:
 - ▶ What do you think would be difficult about following these rules?
 - ▶ Which one of these rules might be difficult to follow? Why?

TIP: Do not skip over the discussion of the rules the first time you introduce students to the QFT.

Review the Rules for Producing Questions every time you use the QFT.



Producing Questions

Once students have discussed the Rules for Producing Questions:

- ▶ Divide students into small groups of 3-5
- ▶ Ask groups to identify a note-taker
- ▶ Distribute **newsprint or worksheets** to each small group

Producing Questions

Introduce the **QFocus** and ask students to:

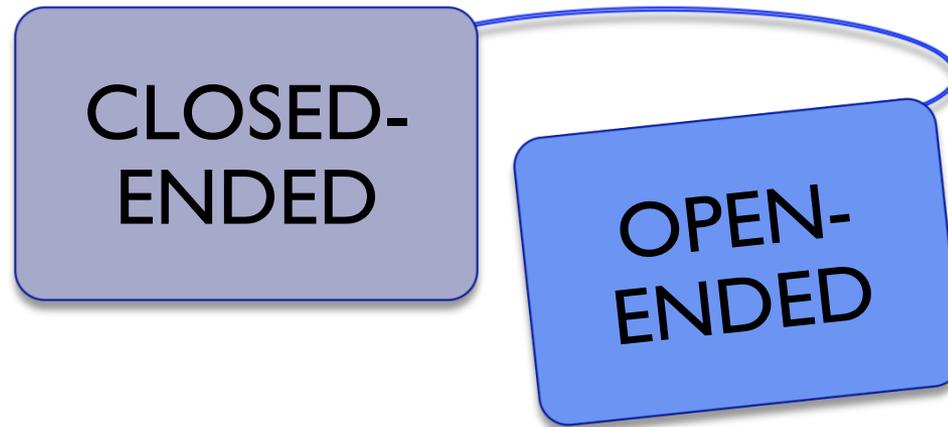
- ▶ Produce as many questions as they can in allotted time
- ▶ Follow the Rules for Producing Questions
- ▶ Number the questions

TIP: The note-taker should also contribute questions



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Categorizing Questions



Categorizing Questions

Define closed and open-ended questions:

- ▶ **Closed-ended Questions** can be answered with a “yes’ or “no” or with a one-word answer
- ▶ **Open-ended Questions** require more explanation



Categorizing Questions

Step 1

Ask students to look over the list and:

- ▶ mark the questions that are **closed-ended** with a “**C**”
- ▶ mark the questions that are **open-ended** with an “**O**”



Categorizing Questions

Step 2

Ask students to name:

- ▶ advantages of **closed-ended questions**

And

- ▶ disadvantages of **closed-ended questions**



Categorizing Questions

Step 2

Ask students to name:

- ▶ advantages of **open-ended questions**

And

- ▶ disadvantages of **open-ended questions**

Please note that both types of questions are useful. There are times in which open-ended questions are more useful and other times the closed-ended are what you need.



Categorizing Questions

Step 3

Ask students to **practice changing** questions from one type to another

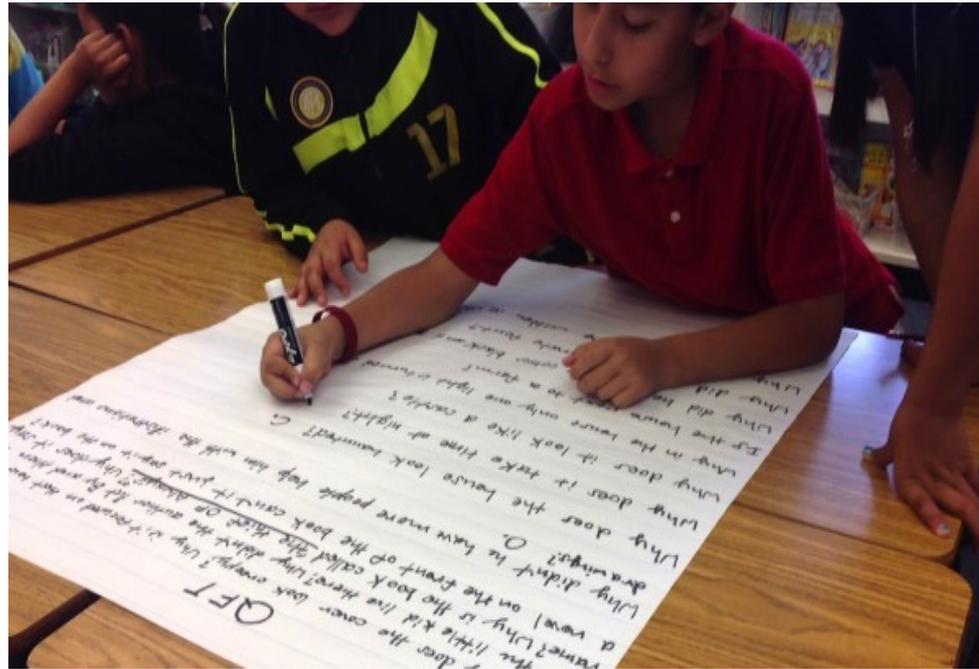
- ▶ “Choose one closed-ended question from your list and change it into an open-ended one.”
- ▶ “Choose one open-ended question from your list and change it into an closed-ended one.”

TIP: If students have questions from only one type, for example they only have open-ended questions, ask them to change two of those questions to closed-ended.



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Prioritizing Questions



Prioritizing Questions

Criteria for prioritizing is usually set by the teacher. Criteria will depend on what you have planned as next steps with the questions. Instructions for prioritization will vary. Here are some examples:

Choose three questions that...

- *most interest you.*
- *you consider to be the most important.*
- *will best help you design your research project*
- *will best help you design your experiment*
- *will best help you solve a problem*
- *you want/need to answer first.*



Prioritizing Questions

- ▶ Ask students to review their list of questions and choose **three** questions (most important; to develop a project, etc.). Mark them with an “**X**”
- ▶ Remind students to keep the QFocus in mind while prioritizing.

Prioritizing Questions

- ▶ Ask students to think about and share their rationale for choosing their priority questions.

For example: “Why did you choose these three as the most important?”

- ▶ Ask students to identify where are their priority questions in the sequence of the whole list of questions.

For example: “What numbers are the priority questions?”

6 SHARE



Reports

- ▶ Ask students to share aloud:

The questions they changed from closed to open-ended and then from open-ended to closed-ended:

- *Read the original question*
- *Read the new question*

2. Their three priority questions.

3. Their reasons for choosing the priority questions.

4. The numbers of the priority questions in the sequence of the entire list.

TIP: One group member can report and others can join in.



Reports

- ▶ When students share the numbers of the priority questions they will notice where in the sequence of questions the priority questions were produced.
- ▶ Often, students notice that the priority questions came from different places (beginning, middle or end) and that helps them see value of generating a lot of questions before choosing priority questions.

TIP: Ask students to pay attention to the numbers of the priority questions.

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Next Steps



Next Steps

You can ask students to use their questions for:

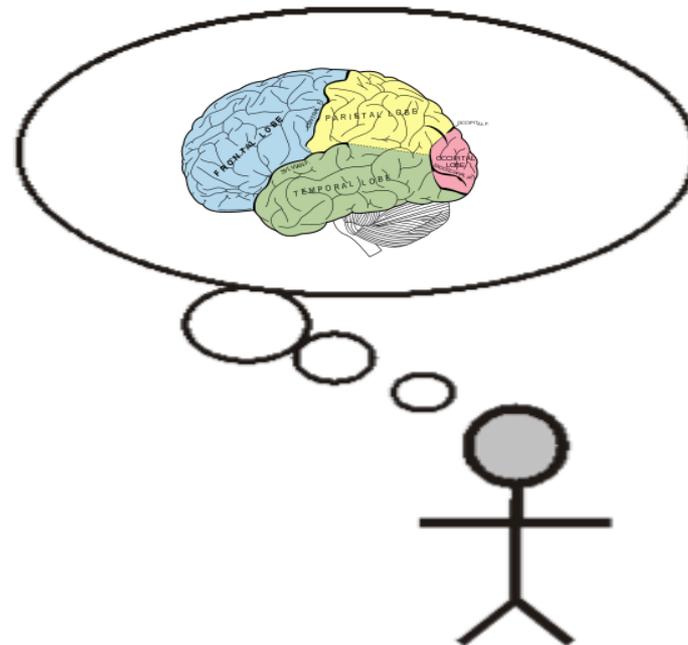
Papers and Essays	Research
Independent Projects	Group Projects
Experiments Presentations/Interviews	Debates Socratic Seminars

- ▶ You could also ask students to decide how they will use their questions.



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Reflection



Reflection

Ask students to think about the work they have done, what they have learned and its value. For example, you can use questions like:

- ▶ What did you learn?
- ▶ What is the value of learning to ask your own questions?
- ▶ How can you use what you learned?

TIP: Use one or more reflection questions.
Ask one question at a time.



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- ▶ Additional materials to help you teach the QFT are available at www.rightquestion.org.
 - ▶ For a comprehensive description of how to use the Question Formulation Technique in the classroom please see the book: Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions (2011: Harvard Education Press). <http://www.hepg.org/hepg/book/144/MakeJustOneChange>
 - ▶ We would appreciate any insights, suggestions or feedback about this presentation.

Thank you!

