

Common Question Traps

Adapted from: Murdoch, Kath. *Power of Inquiry*. Northcote, Australia, Seastar Education, 2015.

<p>Questions designed to embarrass or humiliate the learner: asking a question to ‘test’ whether someone else is listening in unnecessary and demeaning.</p>
<p>Questions that answer themselves: “So, can you see the way adding these three numbers makes it easier to solve the problem?”</p>
<p>Over-use of closed questions or those with yes/no answers: “So, who can tell me the name of this part of the world?”</p>
<p>Rhetorical questions: “Are we ready to begin?”</p>
<p>Disjointed questions that fail to follow through a line of thought, and therefore keep the conversation at the shallow end.</p>
<p>Playing the “guess what’s in the teacher’s ‘head’ game: asking a question and only expecting/accepting one answer.</p>
<p>Lack of ‘wait time’ before and after a question is asked.</p>
<p>Asking a limited range of questions that mainly focus on recall rather than deeper analysis and reflection.</p>
<p>Opting for whole-class discussions rather than the more effective small-group or one-to-one discussions where questioning can be more personalized.</p>
<p>Asking all the questions rather than encouraging students to question each other.</p>
<p>Poor listening to student’s responses and not making eye contact with the student who is talking. Inauthentic listening.</p>
<p>Marginalizing students (often unconsciously) by directing questions only to students we suspect will not know the answer.</p>
<p>Praising ‘correct’ responses in a way that decreases student risk-taking or the sharing of alternative viewpoints.</p>
<p>Waiting until the end of an instructional period to ask questions rather than asking before and during.</p>
<p>Negative or judgemental feedback to what are deemed poor or incorrect responses rather than seeking more information or constructively challenging and probing to scaffold thinking.</p>