

can you be asked?

In an age where AI can generate answers in seconds, the real challenge for educators is to cultivate the kind of thinking that can't be automated. This poster offers practical strategies to foster generative thinking in the classroom that connects, questions, applies, and reflects. Through better questioning, students become not just more knowledgeable, but more curious, capable, and confident in how they think, reason, and communicate.

focus	purpose	examples
retrieval practice	activate prior knowledge and strengthen memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you remember about...? Can you recall three key points from...? What did we learn last time about...? How does this connect to previous learning? What's the first thing that comes to mind when I say...?
elaboration	deepen understanding through explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you think that happens? Can you put that in your own words? What does that mean, exactly? How would you explain this to someone younger? What's the reasoning behind that?
application & transfer	apply learning in new or practical contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where else could this be useful? Can you think of a real-life example? How would this work in a different subject? What would happen if we changed X? How could you use this idea in your own work?
comparative reasoning	build connections and spot patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is this similar to...? What's the main difference between these two ideas? Which one is more effective, and why? Can you compare these examples? What patterns do you notice?
hypothetical thinking	encourage prediction, speculation, and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What might happen if...? How would you solve this problem? If you were in charge, what would you do? What would change if X were removed? Imagine this idea in the future, what might it become?
critical judgement	support evaluation, justification, and discernment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you agree with this view? Why? What are the strengths and weaknesses here? Is there a better way to do this? What would you do differently? Which option would you choose, and why?
metacognition & self-regulation	build awareness of thinking strategies and learning habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What helped you work that out? What was the most challenging part? How did you decide what to do first? If you got stuck, what did you try? How might you approach this differently next time?

reframing questions

Even small shifts in how we phrase our questions can make a big difference. The goal is not just to check understanding, but to invite thinking, surface reasoning, and create space for exploration. Reframe common classroom questions so that they prompt deeper thought and encourage all learners to engage, not just those with their hands up.

avoid	try	why
<i>“Does anyone know the answer?”</i>	<i>“What do you think, (name student), and why?”</i>	Encourages all students to think, not just those who volunteer.
<i>“Who can tell me what I just said?”</i>	<i>“How would you explain that in your own words?”</i>	Moves from repetition to meaningful elaboration.
<i>“Is that clear?”</i>	<i>“What questions do you have?”</i>	Normalises uncertainty and invites genuine dialogue.
<i>“Do you understand?”</i>	<i>“What’s your next step?”</i>	Promotes ownership of learning and self-regulation.
<i>“What’s the answer?”</i>	<i>“How did you work that out?”</i>	Shifts focus from product to process.
<i>“Can you guess?”</i>	<i>“What do you already know that might help?”</i>	Encourages transfer through linking to prior knowledge.
<i>“Who’s got it?”</i>	<i>“What did you notice as you worked through it?”</i>	Builds metacognitive awareness.
<i>“Why didn’t you get it right?”</i>	<i>“What was tricky about this for you?”</i>	Maintains a safe climate for error and exploration.
<i>“What’s wrong with that?”</i>	<i>“What might be another way of looking at it?”</i>	Encourages openness and alternative thinking without judgement.
<i>“Anyone else?”</i>	<i>“Let’s hear a different perspective.”</i>	Signals the value of diverse thinking.

“Better questions don’t just improve answers – they improve learners.”

José Picardo

