Asking better *questions.*

When AI can complete almost any task in seconds, classroom questioning matters more, not less. A good question is the most immediate assessment a teacher has: it shows how a student reasons, connects, applies and reflects, while there is still time to act. Seven types that reveal what a learner actually understands.

Retrieval practice

Activate prior knowledge, strengthen memory

- What do you remember about…?
- Can you recall three key points from…?
- What did we learn last time about…?
- How does this connect to earlier learning?
- What comes to mind first when I say…?

Elaboration

Deepen understanding through explanation

- 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 and transfer

Apply learning in new contexts

- Where else could this be useful?
- Can you think of a real example?
- How would this work in a different subject?
- What would happen if we changed X?
- How could you use this in your own work?

Comparative reasoning

Build connections, spot patterns

- How is this similar to…?
- What's the main difference between these ideas?
- Which is more effective, and why?
- Can you compare these examples?
- What patterns do you notice?

Hypothetical thinking

Encourage prediction and speculation

- 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 and justification

- 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 and self-regulation

Build awareness of thinking and habits

- What helped you work that out?
- What was the hardest part?
- How did you decide what to do first?
- When you got stuck, what did you try?
- How might you approach this differently next time?

Reframing the *everyday* question.

Even a small shift in phrasing changes who does the thinking. The aim is to invite thought, surface reasoning and bring in the students who never raise a hand. Ten common questions, gently reworked. Two things make these effective: a few seconds of wait time, and a room where a wrong answer costs nothing. Without them, calling on a name raises anxiety rather than thinking.

INSTEAD OF	TRY	WHY IT WORKS
"Does anyone know the answer?"	*"What do you think, Sam, and why?"*	Draws everyone into thinking, not only the volunteers.
"Who can tell me what I just said?"	*"How would you explain that in your own words?"*	Moves from repetition to real elaboration.
"Is that clear?"	*"What questions do you have?"*	Normalises uncertainty and invites dialogue.
"Do you understand?"	*"What's your next step?"*	Promotes ownership and self-regulation.
"What's the answer?"	*"How did you work that out?"*	Shifts focus from product to process.
"Can you guess?"	*"What do you already know that might help?"*	Encourages transfer from prior knowledge.
"Who's got it?"	*"What did you notice as you worked through it?"*	Builds metacognitive awareness.
"Why didn't you get it right?"	*"What was tricky about this for you?"*	Keeps a safe climate for error.
"What's wrong with that?"	*"What might be another way of looking at it?"*	Opens up alternatives without judgement.
"Anyone else?"	*"Let's hear a different perspective."*	Signals the value of diverse thinking.