# Questions to Provoke Critical Thinking

Varying question stems can sustain engagement and promote critical thinking. The timing, sequence and clarity of questions you ask students can be as important as the type of question you ask. The table below is organized to help formulate questions provoking gradually higher levels of thinking.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Sample Action Prompts</th>
<th>Example Questions¹</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lower Levels</strong></td>
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</table>
| Remembering     | memorize & recall facts | recognize, list, describe, identify, retrieve, name | What do we already know about…?  
What are the principles of …?  
How does … tie in with what we learned before? |
| Understanding   | interpret meaning     | describe, generalize explain, estimate, predict | Summarize … or Explain …  
What will happen if …?  
What does … mean? |
| **Higher Levels** |         |                       |                    |
| Applying        | apply knowledge to new situations | implement, carry out, use, apply, show, solve, hypothesize | What would happen if…?  
What is a new example of…?  
How could … be used to…?  
What is the counterargument for…? |
| Analyzing       | break down or examine information | compare, organize, deconstruct | Why is … important?  
What is the difference between… and…?  
What are the implications of…?  
Explain why / Explain how?  
What is … analogous to?  
How are … and … similar? |
| Evaluating      | judge or decide according to a set of criteria | check, critique, judge, conclude, explain | How does … affect…?  
Why is … happening?  
What is the best … and why?  
Do you agree or disagree with the statement…?  What evidence is there to support your answer?  
What are the strengths and weakness of?  
What is the nature of…? |
| Creating        | combine elements into a new pattern | design, construct, plan, produce | What is the solution to the problem of…?  
What do you think causes…? Why?  
What is another way to look at…? |