

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Broad Question - prompts a variety of acceptable and generally unpredictable responses.

An instructor should ask broad questions when hoping for unplanned, divergent outcomes. These questions require that students use thinking processes in ways that are unique to the individual rather than planned by the instructor. Broad questions allow the student to make sense of and explore their own ideas freely, in their own terms, often without restrictions and with only minimal guidance by the instructor. These questions are useful to encourage students to synthesize ideas, extend ideas, deduce and predict, organize elements of what they've learned into a fresh pattern, and make learning relevant to their own life experiences. Broad questions encourage students to share various ideas during a discussion, and to value other students' ideas as they are expressed.

Narrow Question - prompts a particular, predictable response planned by the instructor.

When an instructor asks a narrow question, a specific "correct" response or set of responses is expected. Narrow questions require the student to remember information or recognize information that is readily at hand. This is useful to help students recall a fact, define a term, identify something, or review a topic that's been learned. Narrow questions with specific answers can be used to recall previous learning experiences to help establish a base of information for new experiences. Narrow questions can also help students synthesize information in a predictable way, as directed by the instructor. Specific questions that ask students to integrate what they've previously learned are useful if you want students to compare, contrast, associate, explain, state relationships, or arrive at particular conclusions. "Compare," "tell," and "explain" can begin these kinds of integrating statements. Even though a predictable answer is asked for, students may give an explanation in their own words.

Roles for Instructors:

Guide on the Side. Educators who see themselves as facilitators of student learning, helping to direct individual student discoveries and acting as collaborators while investigating topics together.

Sage on Stage. Educators who see themselves as expert bearers of information and understanding, whose role is to fill students' heads with the correct information and facts.

Entertainer. Educators who see themselves as making learning fun, primarily responsible for raising enthusiasm and encouraging excitement about science, by providing an engaging persona and entertaining "bits" for students.

