

## Questions “Good for Nothing”

Linda Nilson (2010) argues that “some types of questions serve no purpose well and can confuse and alienate students” (p. 143). Below are the questions she says instructors should avoid.

Question Type	Description	Examples
Fuzzy questions	Questions that are too vague and unfocused for students to know how to approach them	“Who else knows what else doesn’t fall into this category?” “What about the breakdown of the family?” “Does everyone understand this?” “Any questions?”
Chameleon and shotgun questions	A series of weakly related questions, ranging in topical focus, that are fired off one after the other in hopes that one will hit with the students	“What did you think about the two plays? Did you like them? Did you like one more than the other? Did you have a favorite character? Do you see any common themes? What do you all think?”
Programmed-answer questions	Answers that sound like they are open-ended on the surface, but the instructor presents them with one specific answer in mind	“If the patient does not follow the doctor’s orders, what could happen?”
Put-down questions	Questions that imply students ought to know the answer or shouldn’t have any more questions	“Now that I have explained this topic thoroughly, are there any more questions?”
Ego-stroking questions	Questions that assume superiority of the instructor, to the discouragement of the students	“Please rephrase your answer the way I would say it.”
Dead-end questions	Quiz-show questions with a “yes” or “no” answer; students simply place their bets	“Does four plus four equal eight?” “Did the American Civil War start in 1861?”