

Use Prompts to Help Student Clarify Their Thinking

In discussion forums or live sessions, you can invite students to clarify, expand, and support their thinking by strategically asking follow-up questions. These prompting questions can encourage students to engage in critical thinking and lead them to a deeper understanding of the content.

The following chart identifies prompts that can be used based on how students reply to your questions. The prompting approach can be used in either live sessions or asynchronous chats.

Student Response & Your Goal	Prompt
<p><i>Student Response:</i> No students respond to your question.</p> <p><i>Your Goal:</i> Elicit responses by supporting and guiding students to share an answer.</p>	<p>This three-step approach is most often used in live sessions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repeat the question. <p>Provides students with time to think as well as the opportunity to hear the question again.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Rephrase the question. <p>Consider using different language or emphasizing different words in the question.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Reduce the question. <p>Break the question into parts or ask a more direct version of the question.</p>
<p><i>Student Response:</i> A student provides the correct answer.</p> <p><i>Your Goal:</i> Recognize the response as correct. This gives other students insight into the type of answers you're looking for and also cues them to focus on the correct content.</p>	<p>Clarify the right answer and praise the thinking behind the answer.</p> <p>"Yes, you're on the right track because . . ."</p> <p>Or, "You've applied the process we learned earlier in the module, nice work . . ."</p>
<p><i>Student Response:</i> A student provides the correct answer, but there are other possible answers.</p> <p><i>Your Goal:</i> Encourage another student to extend or add to the answer.</p>	<p>Clarify the right answer and encourage another student to add to the conversation.</p> <p>"You have uncovered an important aspect of the reading. Could someone add to this thinking?"</p>
<p><i>Student Response:</i> The student's answer is unclear.</p> <p><i>Your Goal:</i> Coax more out of the student and help them uncover the assumptions being made.</p>	<p>Rephrase the answer and ask if that was what the student meant: "So what I heard you say was you think the author was not being clear in his/her description? Is that correct?"</p> <p>Ask them to consider a different approach to help them think more deeply. "How might you modify your answer if you took into account . . .?"</p>
<p><i>Student Response:</i> The student's answer is incorrect.</p> <p><i>Your Goal:</i> Lead the student to uncover their error.</p>	<p>"Yes, and if you come to that conclusion, don't you also have to assume . . .?"</p> <p>"I'm not sure I'm following your thinking here. Could you please clarify your thoughts?"</p>