



# Questioning Skills

**Focus:** Writing critical questions

**Materials needed:** A short text



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## Aims

- To encourage teachers to consider different ways of approaching a text
- To develop skills of writing questions to exploit a text

## Procedure

1. Give teachers a blank piece of paper and ask them to tear it carefully into 6–8 strips. (This kinaesthetic start to the activity relaxes teachers and permits them to take the time to work carefully and thoughtfully).
2. Hand out copies of a short text (150–250 words) –ideally one with several layers of meaning / possible interpretations. (Texts taken from an autobiography, literary work, or anecdote work well).
3. Allow teachers time to read the text and then ask them to write a question about the text on each of their 6 to 8 strips of paper. Resist the temptation to give guidance or answer questions on 'what sort of questions' they should write. Allow sufficient time for them to do this stage—often the most interesting and rich questions will come at the end of the process.
4. Put all the questions into the centre of the group (or small groups) of teachers—ideally no more than 5 in a group. Ask the groups to categorise the questions, deciding on the categories among themselves.
5. Invite a spokesperson from each group to share their categories, how they decided on them, and examples of the questions in each category.
6. Review the categories and reflect on which types of questions are typically asked of language learners when working with texts.
7. Invite teachers to discuss the benefits of using the other categories of questions to explore texts with learners, and to write questions on a text they work with.

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