


Critical Thinking Question Stems

The following stems may be used to create questions that stimulate critical thinking.

Table 1. Guiding Critical Thinking

Generic Questions	Specific Thinking Skills Induced
What are the strengths and weaknesses of . . . ?	Analysis/inferencing
What is the difference between . . . and . . . ?	Comparison–contrast
Explain why (Explain how)	Analysis
What would happen if . . . ?	Prediction/hypothesizing
What is the nature of . . . ?	Analysis
Why is . . . happening?	Analysis/inferencing
What is a new example of . . . ?	Application
How could . . . be used to . . . ?	Application
What are the implications of . . . ?	Analysis/inferencing
What is . . . analogous to?	Identification of and creation of analogies and metaphors
What do we already know about . . . ?	Activation of prior knowledge
How does . . . affect . . . ?	Analysis of relationship (cause–effect)
How does . . . tie in with what we learned before?	Activation of prior knowledge
What does . . . mean?	Analysis
Why is . . . important?	Analysis of significance
How are . . . and . . . similar?	Comparison–contrast
How does . . . apply to everyday life?	Application to the real world
What is a counterargument for . . . ?	Rebuttal to argument
What is the best . . . , and why?	Evaluation and provision of evidence
What is a solution to the problem of . . . ?	Synthesis of ideas
Compare . . . and . . . with regard to	Comparison–contrast
What do you think causes . . . ? Why?	Analysis of relationship (cause–effect)
Do you agree or disagree with this statement: . . . ?	Evaluation and provision of evidence
What evidence is there to support your answer?	
What is another way to look at . . . ?	Taking other perspectives

Note. From “Comparison of Self-Questioning, Summarizing and Notetaking Review as Strategies for Learning From Lectures” by A. King, 1992, *American Educational Research Journal*, 29. Copyright 1992 by the American Educational Research Association. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. Also from *Changing College Classrooms: New Teaching and Learning Strategies for an Increasingly Complex World* (p. 24) edited by D. Halpern, 1994, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 1994 by Jossey-Bass. Adapted by permission.

Source: King, A. (1995). [Inquiring minds really do want to know: Using questioning to teach critical thinking.](#)  *Teaching of Psychology*, 22, 13-17.