



What is a "Good" Inquiry Question?

An **inquiry** is any process that has the aim of augmenting knowledge, resolving doubt, or solving a problem. A theory of inquiry is an account of the various types of inquiry and a treatment of the ways that each type of inquiry achieves its aim.

Most importantly...something you are interested in.

1. **The question is open to research.**
 - This means you should be able to find some answers to the question by doing research.
 - An understanding of the question can be obtained within the scope of the course. "Who am I?" may be difficult to find an answer to through research, although you could adapt this question to make it open to research.
2. **You don't already know the answer** or have not already decided on the answer before doing the research.
 - Too often we go after questions for which we already have some kind of answer.
 - This might make it easier to write a quick paper but really violates the spirit of genuine inquiry.
3. **The question may have multiple possible answers** when initially asked.
 - The question should not be answered by a simple yes/no.
 - Questions that examine "why" rather than "what" can help. "What" tends to lead to descriptions or single right answers? "Why" tends to lead to explanations.
 - For example: Do we use all of our brain? This is too restricted. The answer is either yes or no.
4. **It has a clear focus.**
 - Some **focus** is required to allow productive research. An initial *general* question can get things started, but it will also likely need to be revised and focussed as the research continues.
 - Your final question should be as direct and specific as possible, or have clear sub-questions. This will give you a good starting point as well as some direction in terms of how to proceed with your research.
 - For example: What is the mind? This is much too broad. Where would you start? How could you find an answer to this question? This question could be refined to "How does the mind form short-term versus long-term memories?" or "Why does memory differ in a six-year-old vs. an adult?"
 - How you decide to refine your question will depend on your own interests.
5. **The question should be reasonable.**
 - This means that there should be credible information which you can use to research your question.
 - This does NOT mean the question has to be in the area of science, but it does mean that you should take a scientific approach (critical analysis) in researching your question.
 - For example: Do angels exist? You might have difficulty finding information on this topic. Not to mention that it is a yes or no question. Why do people believe in angels in today's society? This type of question can be more objective and will allow you to elaborate more on your topic.
6. **Try to avoid or rephrase questions which have a premise.**
 - For example: Why do we only use 3% of our brain?
 - With this question comes the assumption that we do, in fact, only use 3% of our brain.
 - What if you use this question as the basis for your research, only to discover that is isn't true? A better alternative might be: What influences the percentage of our brain that we use? This questions doesn't make any initial assumptions and leaves room for many possible alternatives.
7. **Make sure you have defined all the terms in your question so you know exactly what you are asking.**
 - If you are using subjective terms such as "latest" or "most recent", be sure to define exactly what you mean by this. For example, "most recent" as in the 1st century? the last decade? the last two years?
8. **A new question can be asked once all your information is gathered.**

- A good inquiry never really completely ends. It should trigger new questions and things you are curious about.
9. **Having the right answer matters to you.**
- This may seem an odd thing to include but it is at the foundation to inquiry.
 - Inquiry is about needing to know the answer to a question, or researching a question where the answer has consequences, so there is some pressure to get it right. Anything short of this can be a game, fun, mentally stimulating, but isn't genuine inquiry.

How Do You Start Questioning?

There are many different ways. Some potential ways are:

Triggered Brainstorming

1. Use a trigger such as a picture, a quotation, a current event, a theme, an unusual object.
2. Brainstorm areas of interest and curiosity based on the trigger. This may be done better first in small groups of four to five.
3. Translate the areas of interest into questions.
4. Allow students an opportunity to do some research on the questions.
5. Discuss findings, and revisit the questions to improve, focus or change it as needed. Again, this may be easier done first in small groups, then reporting back to the whole class.

"**Quessussions**" By Paul Bidwell (University of Saskatchewan, English Department)

...Is a shift from making statements to starting to wonder and ask questions. The participants make points as in a normal discussion, but the use of statements is forbidden.

1. Provide a trigger (such as a poem, topic or theme).
2. Have a discussion with the whole class, with the strict rules below.
3. The discussion can only contain questions.
 - This is monitored by the class. (Participants yell "Statement" or or make a sound if anyone makes a statement rather than asking a question).
 - Do not raise your hand.
 - Open-ended questions are preferred to closed questions. "What", "Why" "How" rather than "Is it true that...."
 - Try to ask questions about feeling as well as facts, try to ask simple knowledge questions as well as sophisticated questions.
 - Humour is encouraged, sarcasm is discouraged.
 - A question does not have to be directly related to the previous question.
4. This forces students to reflect on questions and go one level deeper than statements.
Example: Trigger = Hamlet

Followed by discussion:

"Who is Hamlet?"

"Why is Hamlet in the play?"

Taken from: http://cfl.mcmaster.ca/resources/misc/good_inquiry_question.html

What is the goal of your project? (To create, to analyze, to stage, to make)

What is your guiding question?

What is the central focus of your project? Why are you focusing on this?

Why do you want to do this project?

An Example of How to Formulate an Inquiry Question

Taken from: <http://lynnbergholmpersonalproject.wordpress.com/2012/09/26/developing-an-inquiry-question/>

“After lots of thought and lots of decisions have been made, I feel like I can now begin to develop my **inquiry question** for this project. When creating my question, I must **keep in mind my area of interaction, Approaches to Learning** as well as the things I want to investigate throughout this project. The AOI Approaches to Learning is all about how we learn. So, if the personal interest that I am relating this too is dance, I will want to investigate the teaching techniques of dance (hip hop) – different ways of learning. However, I must also keep in mind the communication aspect to ATL that I am also interested in; I want to develop my communication skills through this project because I find this to be a useful skill to develop as well as it being a huge part of ATL.

Now... Let’s try and put all this in to question form!

Brainstorming a lot of questions...

How can I communicate clearly and what are the effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful P.E. lesson with a focus on hip hop dance?

How can I communicate effectively and what are effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful P.E. lesson with a focus on hip hop dance?

What are the effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful P.E. lesson with a focus on dance and how must this be communicated?

What are the effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful P.E. lesson with a focus on dance?

What are the effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful P.E. lesson during the dance unit?

What are effective teaching techniques of dance to be learned to create a successful P.E. lesson?

MY FINAL INQUIRY QUESTION: “What are the effective teaching techniques to be learned to lead a successful hip hop dance lesson with Lower School students