

## Designing Discussion Questions using Bloom's Taxonomy\*

To challenge your class to address a topic at a high level of abstraction, use questions that are developmental in nature and that utilize multiple levels of thinking. These types of questions promote critical thinking and help students to work collaboratively. Bloom's Taxonomy, described below, presents five levels of questioning from lowest to highest levels of abstraction; however, sequential use of these levels is not a requisite. For example, to elicit students' ideas, the discussion may begin with questions of evaluation and progress to alternative levels of questions depending on the issues and ideas that emerge from the evaluative discussion.

As you prepare to lead discussions, you may want to have a repertoire of questions that utilize the five levels of thinking that follow:

- 1. Knowledge**, identification, and recall. Does the student know the information?  
Sample questions: *What* did the policy propose?  
*Who* supported the policy?  
*When* was the bill passed?  
*What* events influenced the passage of the bill?  
*Identify* ...  
*Define* ...  
*List* ...
- 2. Understanding** and comprehension. Does the student understand?  
Sample questions: *In your own words* define aging-in-place.  
*Summarize* why older adults prefer to live in their own homes.  
*What does it mean* ...?  
*Contrast* ...  
*How do you know* ...?
- 3. Application**. Can the student use previously learned information in a new situation?  
Sample questions: *Describe how* a prospective payment plan would work in this case.  
*How might* nursing homes been viewed in the 1800s?  
*Where else might this apply*?  
*Explain how* one might use ...  
*Use* ...
- 4. Analysis and Synthesis**. Can the student dissect and reassemble the idea or issue? Can the student view the issue from a different perspective? Can the student examine the available facts and offer alternative interpretations and solutions?  
Sample questions: *What caused* the aging political lobby to respond this way?  
*Why* might Medicaid encourage the use of skilled nursing?  
*How* could the incentives be realigned to support in-home care?  
*What are the important elements* to each party's interest?  
*How are these programs interrelated*?
- 5. Evaluation**. Can the student assess, form opinions, establish appropriate standards and criteria, evaluate ethical dilemmas, and critically examine an issue or idea?  
Sample questions: *Which method, procedure, or solution* is better?  
*Can you evaluate this idea in terms of* ...?  
*Which approach would you choose? Why*?  
*Judge, select, or rate* ...?

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\* Adapted from Bloom, B. S. *et al.* (1965). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Cognitive domain*. New York: David McKay, and handout from Center for Instructional Development and Research at the University of Washington, Seattle.