



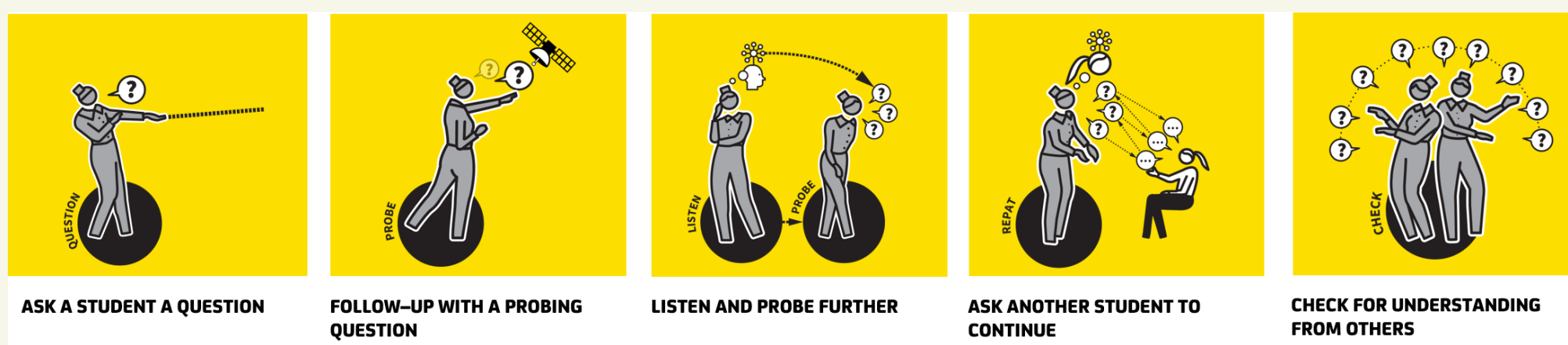
# EPHS Teaching and Learning Blog

## Questioning - Probing



### WHAT'S THE IDEA?

- It is important to ask questions that make students probe their schema for the ideas being discussed. Well-chosen questions can support students to make links between ideas, to rehearse explanations to support long-term memory, to connect abstract and concrete examples and to identify knowledge gaps and misconceptions.



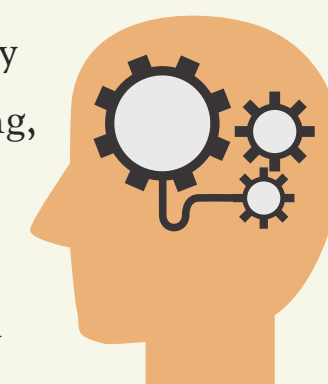
### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Probing is a form of questioning that encourages students to extend their verbal answers in the classroom. There are three types of probing questions which are particularly effective for both classroom teaching and small group/individual tuition: probing to clarify ideas, probing to expand on ideas, and probing to contextualise ideas.



### WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

- It is sometimes tempting, when a student gives you the right answer on the first attempt, to move straight on to the next part of your lesson or tutorial. By moving on immediately, however, you are wasting a learning opportunity for that child. They already had the knowledge you were requesting, and although their answer might have helped other students within a classroom setting, their level of understanding (and the understanding of students at the same level as them) has been left unaltered.
- This is where probing comes in. Encouraging students to explain their answer or to further develop an element of their answer helps to push their own understanding (and their levels or articulacy!) to the next level. This is known as elaboration. Research suggests that this process helps your brain to form new connections between information, making it more likely that you remember and store it.



### TOP TIPS

- Use the Q Matrix (saved in the T&L desktop folder) to help you phrase your probing questions. Aim to plan questions that use the question stems in the red area



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

[HTTPS://WWW.SEC-ED.CO.UK/BEST-PRACTICE/ASKING-PROBING-HIGH-QUALITY-QUESTIONS-IN-THE-CLASSROOM/](https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/asking-probing-high-quality-questions-in-the-classroom/)

## EXAMPLES OF PROBING QUESTIONS

### **CLARIFYING**

WHEN YOU ASK STUDENTS TO CLARIFY AN ANSWER, YOU ARE ASKING THEM TO MAKE IT MORE CLEAR:

- WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
- HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT TO A YOUNGER STUDENT?
- CAN YOU GIVE ME ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THAT?
- HOW DID YOU WORK THAT OUT?

### **EXPANDING**

WHEN YOU ASK STUDENTS TO EXPAND ON AN IDEA, YOU ARE ASKING THEM TO ELABORATE ON AND EXTEND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE IDEA:

- HOW DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON...?
- WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE FOR THAT?
- THAT'S AN INTERESTING WORD YOU USED THERE – CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY YOU CHOSE IT?
- WHAT WOULD THIS MEAN FOR... (RELATED IDEA, TOPIC, STEP, OR PROCESS)?

### **CONTEXTUALISING**

WHEN YOU ASK STUDENTS TO CONTEXTUALISE AN ANSWER, YOU ARE ASKING THEM TO PLACE IT IN ITS CORRECT CONTEXT TO DISCOVER HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT THE ACCURACY OF THE ANSWER:

- HOW DID YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE TIME PERIOD AFFECT YOUR ANSWER?
- HOW WOULD YOUR ANSWER CHANGE IF WE WERE ALIVE 100 YEARS AGO?
- WHY DO YOU THINK SOME PEOPLE MIGHT DISAGREE WITH YOUR ANSWER?