

# Types of Questions

## The Opening Question

The opening question typically begins a Socratic seminar. Like open questions, the opening question should not have a right answer and should appeal to a universal idea, such as *jealousy*, *anger*, *power*, *greed* or *happiness*.

## Closed & Open (Open-ended)

Closed questions have a right answer, while open questions do not. Closed questions generally close down inquiry and conversation, while open questions promote more.

## Shallow & Deep

Shallow questions probe for surface or conventional answers. They have typical or predictable answers, and elicit regurgitation, even if they are open-ended. Deep questions search for more than quick answers and demand inquiry, research, and substantiation. Many deep questions are open-ended and philosophical or existential.

## Leading

Leading questions have the answer embedded in them. Because of this, they are antithetical to the seminar process. Students don't have to think critically because the answer is already implied. A quick fix to this is to state what you're thinking and then follow up with another question.

## Thinking

Thinking questions are like rhetorical questions in that there is not an expected response. They are to be pondered and mulled over by the students, rather than being interrupted by raised hands or overly quick answers. Attach a tag at the beginning when asking them: "This is a thinking question: What is time?"

## Fixed & Emergent

Fixed questions are ones that are prepared ahead of time, such as the questions listed at the end of a typical textbook. They are fixed in the sense that they are unchanging and are not necessarily directly relevant to the immediate conversation. Emergent questions grow naturally out of the conversation and arise based on the specific circumstances.

## Clarifying & Explanatory

Clarifying questions seek to elucidate something that has already occurred, whereas explanatory questions ask for additional information.