



EduTrend Contents

P4C · ASKING PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS · MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Question Ladder

Climbing from first questions to deeper follow-up questions

Ages 12–14

Level: Intermediate

50 minutes

Circle and small groups
· up to 30

Activity 04

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 04 · AT A GLANCE

The Question Ladder

Students start with a first question, such as “Is it OK to break a rule?” In threes, one answers, one asks follow-up questions and one records. Follow-ups climb a ladder: What do you mean by...? Why do you think that? Can you give an example? What if...? What follows from that? Roles rotate, then the class enquires into which follow-up questions moved thinking furthest.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- ask follow-up questions;
- use clarification and implication questions;
- record reasoning;
- reflect on dialogue quality.

KEY WORDS

follow-up · clarify · example ·
implication · ladder · dialogue

CURRICULUM LINKS

English: speaking and listening.
History: questioning sources.
PSHE: communication.

1	2	3	4	5	6
STIMULUS	THINK	QUESTION	ENQUIRE	BUILD	REFLECT
Share something to think about	Quiet thinking time	Create and choose a question	Reason together	Agree, disagree, add	Last words

Materials (per class)

- Question ladder cards
- Recording sheet
- Question and thinking-move cards
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Read the stimulus and note possible concepts.
- Prepare question and thinking-move cards.
- Set out a circle so everyone can see each other.
- Print the worksheets.

SAFETY

Everyone may pass. Discuss ideas, not people, and use the story or invented examples rather than personal situations.

ACTIVITY 04 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Stay neutral: ask for reasons, examples and counter-examples rather than giving your own view.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–8 min Stimulus	Give each group a first question.	<i>"What did you notice?"</i>
8–20 min Questions	Students create questions in pairs and vote on one.	<i>"Which question is most interesting to talk about?"</i>
20–44 min Enquiry	Enquire into the chosen question, building on each other's ideas.	<i>"Which questions help thinking go deeper?"</i>
44–50 min Last words	Each person says one last thought or passes.	<i>"Has your thinking changed?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Climb all five rungs with a partner and record how their answer changed.

ACTIVITY 04 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The philosophy in brief

Follow-up questions that ask for reasons and examples are central to facilitating philosophical discussion.

Rotating roles lets every student practise questioning, not just answering.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Follow-ups are interrupting.” They show listening.
- “Deeper means harder words.” It means clearer reasons.
- “The questioner should show they know.” They should help the speaker think.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use three rungs of the ladder.

Stretch

Add a rung of your own.

WORKSHEET 1

Question ladder

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record the climb.

Question ladder

Rung	Question asked	Answer
What do you mean?		
Why?		
Example?		
What if?		
What follows?		

WORKSHEET 2

Thinking moves

Use these in the enquiry.

Thinking moves

Thinking move	My example
I agree with... because...	
I disagree with... because...	
An example is...	
A counter-example is...	
Building on what... said...	

WORKSHEET 3

Last words

Before and after.

Is asking a good question as important as giving a good answer? Before the enquiry I thought... Now I think... because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Asks a philosophical question	Gives reasons and examples	Listens and builds on others

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

The Question Ladder is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents P4C Asking Philosophical Questions programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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