

## Best Practice: Effective Questions

The quality of the first post in a thread influences the thought level of subsequent postings. A carefully worded discussion question is perhaps the most important factor in using discussions to satisfy your learning objectives.



## Using Bloom's Taxonomy

You can use Bloom's Taxonomy to determine what type of question to develop, as well as how to word it. In this classification system, the least complex level, information recall, resides at the bottom of the pyramid as a knowledge base. At the top, evaluation, synthesis, and analysis require the most complex and abstract thinking. Discussions, along with creative assignments and group work, are for higher order thinking.



## Essential and Guiding Questions

Essential and guiding questions may also draw out higher order thinking.

- Essential questions require skills, such as analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating. Answers to essential questions cannot be readily found on the internet and copied; they must have personal meaning and insight constructed by the student.
- Guiding questions help students answer the essential question. These questions are subcategories of the main topic and may tap into lower levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

## Ideas for Guiding Questions

You can develop guiding questions and use them in a number of ways:

- Students can work in small groups to develop their own guiding questions to help them answer the essential question.
- You can start with guiding questions and lead up to the essential question through the course of the discussion.
- You can include them with the initial post to help students get started.
- You can interject guiding questions when a lull occurs.

### *Example: Essential Question*

How would you design the perfect online instructor?

### *Example: Guiding Questions*

- What assumptions do you hold about teaching effectiveness?
- How would you assess an instructor's performance?
- Identify a list of traits that describe the qualification of perfect. Think about your own experiences as a student.
- List traits you would avoid in designing the perfect instructor.

