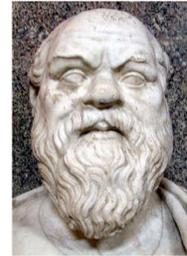


# The Socratic Method & Socratic Questioning

## WIKEPEDIA Definition

- The term **Socratic Questioning** is used to describe a kind of questioning in which an original question is responded to as though it were an answer.
- This in turn forces the first questioner to reformulate a new question in light of the progress of the discourse.



Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic\\_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socratic_method)

## Background

Named for Socrates (ca. 470-399 B. C.), the early Greek philosopher/teacher, a Socratic approach to teaching is based on the practice of disciplined, rigorously thoughtful dialogue.

The instructor professes ignorance of the topic under discussion in order to elicit engaged dialogue with students.

Socrates was convinced that disciplined practice of thoughtful questioning enables the scholar/student to examine ideas logically and to be able to determine the validity of those ideas.

Also known as the **dialectical approach**, this type of questioning can correct misconceptions and lead to reliable knowledge construction

## How do you do it?

- Although “Socratic questioning” appears simple, it is in fact intensely rigorous.
- As described in the writings of Plato, a student of Socrates, the teacher feigns ignorance about a given subject in order to acquire another person’s fullest possible knowledge of the topic.
- Individuals have the capacity to recognize contradictions, so Socrates assumed that incomplete or inaccurate ideas would be corrected during the process of disciplined questioning, and hence would lead to progressively greater truth and accuracy.

Source: <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/socratic/second.html>

## The Purpose of **SOCRATIC QUESTIONS**

The overall purpose is to challenge accuracy and completeness of thinking in a way that acts to

**move people towards  
their ultimate goal**

Source: [http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic\\_questions.htm](http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm)

## The Socratic Method & Socratic Questioning *continued*

### There are 6 types of Socratic Questions

1. Questions for clarification.
2. Questions that probe assumptions.
3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence.
4. Questions about Viewpoints and Perspectives.
5. Questions that probe implications and consequences.
6. Questions about the question.

#### 1. Questions for clarification.

- Why do you say that?
- How does this relate to our discussion?
- “Are you going to include the \_\_\_\_\_ needs in your potential solicitation?”

#### 2. Questions that probe assumptions.

- What could we assume instead?
- How can you verify or disapprove that assumption?
- “Why are the \_\_\_\_\_ needs not part of the solicitation?”

#### 3. Questions that probe reasons and evidence.

- What would be an example?
- What is \_\_\_\_\_ analogous to?
- What do you think causes \_\_\_\_\_ to happen?
- Why?

#### 4. Questions about Viewpoints and Perspectives.

- What would be an alternative?
- What is another way to look at it?
- Would you explain why it is necessary or beneficial, and who benefits?
- Why is \_\_\_\_\_ the best?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of \_\_\_\_\_?
- How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ similar?
- What is a counter-argument for \_\_\_\_\_?

Source: <http://www.engin.umich.edu/~CRE/probsolv/strategy/cthinking.htm>

## The Socratic Method & Socratic Questioning *continued*

### 5. Questions that probe implications and consequences.

- What generalizations can you make?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- What are you implying?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ affect \_\_\_\_\_?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ tie in with what we learned before?

### 6. Questions about the question.

- What was the point of this question?
- Why do you think I asked this question?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ apply to our situation?

### Why Use Socratic Questioning?

Socratic questioning helps people think critically by focusing explicitly on the **process** of thinking.



### Remember: 3 Ways to Use Socratic Questioning

#### To explore a problem.

“Describe different types of tectonic movement along plate boundaries.”

#### To encourage creativity and brainstorming.

“Think of as many causes as possible for the origin of a large boulder found perched upon a nearly flat plain that is underlain by a rock type different from that of the boulder.”

#### To focus attention on specifics.

“Compare the evidence used by scientists to support the idea of biological evolution (or modern global warming) with that used by others who reject the possibility of evolution (or global warming).”

Source: <http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/socratic/second.html>

### In Summary...

- Socratic questions are used to sharpen focus, and clarify a situation through dialogue.

