

The Science of Learning Well... Together

Student Tip #6

We can build a deep understanding of something when we ask the right questions - questions that help to make connections between new and existing knowledge, questions that help to clarify ideas, questions that explain 'why' and 'how', questions that ask for reasons and justifications for a decision or response. This strategy helps you and your group to develop a useful set of questions to build deeper understanding or stronger reasoning. This strategy can be used with a range of subjects and tasks, including creative tasks, performances, and inquiries.

Justify That!

STEP 1: On Your Own...

As you study or complete tasks in all different subjects, get into the habit of writing yourself some questions about things you are not sure about, ideas you want to get more information on, ways that an idea might connect to something else, how or why something works the way it does, or other things that you wonder about.

Make a file with a list of all of these questions.

Look through the questions and notice how they start. Remove the detail of the question so that you are just left with the start of your question.



STEP 2: With Your Group...



In the group, everyone share the question starts that they have found.



Create a shared page of ways to start questions.



Use these as prompts as ways to ask each other questions about concepts, ideas, content, performances, or products.

Why does...?
How does that connect to...?
What would happen if...?
How do you know...?



When a question is challenging for someone or for the group to answer, develop a strategy together to address that challenge and find a resolution.

STEP 3: On your own...

Use the questions to challenge your own thinking when you are working on a task.

Share the question prompts with your family - maybe display them somewhere that everyone can see them. Use them to prompt each other to think more deeply about ideas.