Experiencing the
Question Formulation Technique™
(QFT™)

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to give you a quick overview of the Question Formulation Technique™ (QFT™) and to provide you with an outline you can use to experience the question formulation process.

We hope that after using this guide, you will feel more prepared to use the QFT and introduce it to your class or colleagues.

The guide is divided into two brief sections:

    I.   **Key Components of the Question Formulation Technique**

    II.   **Experiencing the Question Formulation Technique**

Please review the key components and then complete all the steps in section II.

Teachers around the country and beyond are integrating the QFT into their classroom practice across grade levels, subject areas and levels of academic readiness with great results. They have reported that students who learn to ask their own questions are more engaged, take greater ownership of their learning and learn more.

Source: www.rightquestion.org

1. KEY COMPONENTS OF THE QUESTION FORMULATION TECHNIQUE™

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) is a simple step-by-step, rigorous process that facilitates the asking of many questions. The process includes the following steps:

1. **A Question Focus (QFocus)**
2. **The Rules for Producing Questions**
3. **Producing Questions**
4. **Categorizing Questions**
5. **Prioritizing Questions**
6. **Next Steps**
7. **Reflection**

1. The Question Focus (QFocus) – A stimulus; a springboard you will use to ask questions. The QFocus can be a topic, image, phrase or situation that will serve as the "focus" for generating questions. An effective QFocus should be clear, should provoke and stimulate new lines of thinking and should not be a question.

2. The Rules for Producing Questions – Each of the four rules supports a behavior that facilitates effective question formulation.

- **Ask as many questions as you can**
- **Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer any questions**
- **Write down every question exactly as it is stated**
- **Change any statement into a question**

The first step for producing questions is to review the rules and name potential challenges in following them.

The rules can be difficult to follow at times because you are being asked to work in a way that might be new or different from what you are accustomed to. The goal here is to create awareness of the difficulties and help you abide by the rules as you work producing questions.

3. **Produce Questions**- You will use the Question Focus (QFocus) to formulate as many questions as you can. Ask all kinds of questions about the topic, phrase, image, situation, etc. presented. Please make sure to follow the rules.

This part of the process allows you to think freely without having to worry about the quality of the questions you are asking.

4. **Improving the Questions** – Once you have a list of questions, the next step is to learn about two different types of questions you might have on your list: *closed-ended questions*– questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" or with one word - and *open-ended questions* –questions that require and explanation.

This part of the process develops as follows:
   o First, please review your list and identify the closed-ended questions with a "C" and the open-ended with an "O."

   o Second, think about and name the advantages and disadvantages of asking each type of question. You will see that there is value in asking both types of questions.

   o Third, practice changing questions from one type to another. Changing the questions will help you learn how to edit your questions to meet your purpose.

5. **Prioritizing Questions** – You might have a lot of questions on your list. It will be easier to work with the questions if some priorities are established. You will now choose three questions based on actions you want to take. For example, three most important questions, three questions you would like to address first, three questions you want to explore further, etc.

After choosing the priority questions your next step is to name a rationale for choosing.

As a last step in prioritizing, please pay attention to the numbers of your priority questions. Are your priority questions at the beginning, in the middle or at the end?

6. Next Steps – Your questions can now be put into action. You might already have criteria on what to do with the questions. For example, you may use the questions to do research, develop a project, use the questions as a guide, etc.

7. Reflection – This is the last step in the process. It is now time to reflect on the work you have done: what you have learned and how you can use it. The reflection helps internalize the process, its value and how to apply it further.

2.   EXPERIENCING THE QUESTION FORMULATION TECHNIQUE™

We now invite you to experience and familiarize yourself with the QFT process before you teach it to others. Below is an outline you can follow. Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary. Use the times suggested or do it at your own pace. Please make sure to complete all the steps.

Step 1: Review the Rules for Producing Questions   2 minutes

Here are the Rules for Producing Questions:

> **Ask as many questions as you can**
>
> **Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer the questions**
>
> **Write down every question exactly as it is stated**
>
> **Change any statement into a question**

> **What might be difficult about following the rules?**

Step 2: Producing Your Questions   4 minutes

Here is the Question Focus (QFocus). Please choose one of the following:

        _____Teaching students to ask questions
        _____Students are not asking questions

1. **Ask questions about the QFocus you chose.**

2.   **Make sure to follow the rules.**

3. **List and number your questions.**

Step 3: Categorize Your Questions   5 minutes

In your list, you might have the two types of questions previously mentioned: closed-ended and open-ended. Here are working definitions for closed and open-ended questions:

Closed-ended questions can be answered with "yes" or "no" or with one word.

Open-ended questions require an explanation and cannot be answered with "yes" or "no" or with one word.

1.   **Review your list of questions and identify closed- and open-ended questions. Mark the open-ended questions with an O and the closed-ended questions with a C.**

2a. **Name advantages and disadvantages of asking closed-ended questions:**

Advantages	Disadvantages

b. Name advantages and disadvantages of asking open-ended questions:

Advantages	Disadvantages

3. **Change questions from one type to another.** Go back to your list of questions and change one closed-ended question into an open-ended, and change one open-ended question into a closed-ended one. Make the changes right on the list.

Step 4: Prioritize Your Questions   3 minutes

1. **Choose the three most important questions from your list. Mark them with an "X."**

2. **What was your reason for selecting those three?**

3. **What numbers are your priority questions?**

Step 5: Next Steps   2 minutes

✎ **How will you use your questions?**

Step 6: Reflection   3 minutes

✎   **What did you learn?**

How can you use it?

> The process you just experienced is the same one you can teach to students or to teachers in your school, district or community. There are additional materials available www.rightquestion.org to help you explore how to effectively teach the QFT to others.

For a comprehensive description and analysis of how to use the Question Formulation Technique™ in the classroom please see *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions*, 2011 Harvard Education Press.
http://www.hepg.org/hep/book/144/MakeJustOneChange

We would appreciate any insights, suggestions or feedback about this guide and the process you just experienced.   **Thank you!**