Questioning techniques for tutors

These techniques help you discover what a student knows or does not know and keep your sessions interesting.

- Probing Questions — A probing question generally follows an initial question from the tutor and a response from the tutee. They can be used in any order and repeated throughout a session.

- Clarification questions — ask for more information
  - Examples: Can you rephrase that?
  - Can you be more specific?
  - What do you mean by ________?
  - Can you explain it to me?

These are useful in clearing up miscommunications and in determining how much the tutee understands

- Critical awareness questions — ask for justification of the response; requires the student to think more deeply about his response.
  - Examples: What are you assuming?
  - Why do you think that is so?
  - What is the opposite point of view?
  - What are some examples you can include?

This type of question helps the tutee learn the habit of self-monitoring and it reveals when he is simply reciting memorized material.

- Refocusing questions — moves the discussion on after the tutee has provided a good response.
  - Examples: What effects will this have on _____?
  - How does this idea relate to your thesis/ or to the author’s thesis?
  - How do the ideas in this paragraph relate to each other?
  - What similarities/difference do you find between these two writers' point of view?
  - Can you summarize our discussion?
This type of question helps the tutee see relationships between ideas. It encourages the tutee to begin writing. It demonstrates the tutee’s depth of understanding of the topic.

- Prompting questions—generally follows an “I don’t know” response to a question.
  - Examples: Rephrase the question in different terms.
  - Refer to material already mastered (If we know Joe is the subject, can we find the verb by asking what Joe is doing?
  - Provide a partial answer (If nature is the noun form, what is the adjective form?)

This type of question keeps the tutee engaged and builds on previous achievement.