

# Costa Levels Questions

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.” –Eugène Ionesco

## Costa Levels

Level One: Basic input / gathering information– generally aren’t broken into simpler questions.

*Example level one:*

- When was the war of 1812? (level 1)

count	discuss	interpret	observe	relate	translate
define	explain	list	outline	restate	why
describe	find	locate	recite	state	do you think

Level Two: processing information– compares two or more like questions.

*Example level two:*

- Compare and contrast apples and oranges. (level 2)
  - Describe an apple. (level 1)
  - Describe an orange. (level 1)

analyze	compare	contrast	explain why	infer	sequence
categorize	complete	distinguish	identify	investigate	show
classify	construct	examine	illustrate	separate	use

Level Three: creating new ideas– compares two or more unlike questions. Can have multiple correct answers.

*Example level three:*

- Argue that penguins behave well. (level 3)
  - How do penguins behave? (level 1)
  - Distinguish good and bad behavior. (level 2)

apply a principle	construct	determine	generalize	plan	rate
argue *	create	develop	hypothesize	predict	recommend
assess	debate *	devise	imagine	prioritize *	speculate
choose *	decide *	evaluate	judge *	produce	select *
compose	design	formulate	justify	propose *	verify

\* – discuss several possibilities.

## Open-ended vs. closed-ended questions

Open-ended questions have “unlimited” responses, like essay questions. Write open-ended questions for tutorial.

Closed-ended question have pre-set answers. They include multiple choice, true/false, yes/no, and simple statistical questions (e.g., what’s your height?). Closed-ended questions work well for tests, surveys, and forms.

## Opinion Questions

Use level three words when writing opinion questions for tutorial. They create boundaries which focus the conversation, cause less conflict, and lead to more thought provoking discussion.

Questions that have only one source for their answers are always level one. Because questions asking “do you think ...” or “what’s your opinion ...” source only the respondent, they are considered level one.

# Making better questions

## Brainstorming Rules:

- Welcome all ideas
- Be creative
- Build on other people's ideas
- Quantity over quality
- Stick to a time limit

- Reword the question using other words from the same Costa level.
- Construct a new question using words from higher or lower Costa levels.
- Use several level one questions to create a level two or three question.
- Relate ideas from the question to: a personal experience, a movie, to the "big" questions of life, or random words (to find "hidden connections").
- If you don't know how to answer the question, develop a new question that you predict will have a similar answer but is easier to discuss. Example: Change "What caused the Civil War?" into "Compare and contrast the North and the South before the Civil War."

## Steps to a successful tutorial session

(Costa levels in parenthesis)

1. *Read* individual questions aloud (1) and *evaluate* their Costa level (3).
2. *Develop* level one questions into a level two or three question (3).
3. Brainstorm possible answers to the question (3).
4. *Evaluate* the brainstormed ideas (3) and *discuss* how well they answer the question (1).
5. *Summarize* this process (3).
6. Repeat as time allows.

### Tao of tutorial

- Bring books and notes that can help answer your questions.
- Not all brainstormed ideas are factual.
- Get the whole group involved.
- Remain non-judgmental.
- Take Cornell notes.

## Group roles

Group roles assign tasks to one group member so that work is not duplicated. It is important to remember that *roles do not give a group member extra power*, only extra responsibility. When that responsibility is handled well, it leads to trust and respect from other group members.

Role	Responsibility
Checker	Checks the group's understanding.
Encourager	Encourages reluctant or shy students to participate.
Gate Keeper	Equalizes participation to be sure no one dominates.
Material monitor	Picks up and returns materials quickly.
Praiser	Shows appreciation of other's contributions and recognizes accomplishments.
Question ambassador	Leads selection of discussion method (e.g. brainstorm, Venn Diagram).
Question commander	Makes sure all students' questions are asked and answered.
Quiet Captain	Monitors noise level.
Recorder	Writes down ideas, decisions, and plans. <i>Everyone keeps their own notes.</i>
Reflector	Keeps group aware of progress.
Taskmaster	Keeps the group on task.

The four ways you can answer a question are:

1. by creative thought
2. by being taught
3. by experience
4. by studying