

The Questions Game

Summary

In pairs, students will take turns sharing a political stance they hold, and their partner will listen and only ask questions (rather than respond) in order to learn as much as they can about their partner's views and why they hold those views.

Outcomes

- Students will practice listening and questioning before responding or judging
- Students will practice sharing not just what they think about a political issue, but why.

Details

For Who?	Secondary school and older; any level of experience with constructive dialogue
How Long?	15 minutes in total: 10 minutes in pairs, 5 minute debrief
Supplies Needed	None

Suggested Language for Instructor Framing

“Constructive dialogue is about understanding, not changing others’ minds. We are going to practice listening without responding, and asking questions that can get people to share even more. Good listening, and thoughtful question-asking are fundamental skills of constructive dialogue.”

Detailed Agenda

1. Silent Brainstorm

- a. First, invite participants to think about a political issue, value, or opinion that they hold.
- b. Suggested Language: *“Start by thinking about a **political opinion or value** that you hold. To get you thinking, consider your answers to these questions: When you think about the problems of the world, what comes to mind as the most concerning ones? What’s an issue you get really fired up and angry? What is the issue you are most likely to write to a politician about, or attend a protest about?”*

2. Sharing in Pairs

- a. Next, divide participants into pairs for 5 minutes.
- b. Instructions:
 - i. Person 1: Share your political opinion, value, or stance.
 - ii. Person 2: Ask follow-up questions to understand more about your partner’s particular stance. See what you can learn from *just* asking questions. Hold back on responding or sharing anything about your own stance – Person 2’s contributions should ONLY be in the form of questions.
 - iii. Person 1: Respond to the questions being asked honestly.
 - iv. After one 5 minute round, pairs should switch roles.

Examples of Constructive Questions

- What makes you say that?
- Why is that issue so important to you?
- Is there a person or experience you’ve had that influenced your belief?
- Can you say more about what you mean when you say _____?
- Why do you think that is?
- Have you always felt that way?

Wrap-up

Debrief Questions

- What did you notice or experience in your pairs?
- What did it feel like when you were sharing about your belief?

- What did it feel like to *just* ask questions?
- Did anything surprise you?

Instructor Considerations

The Questions Game can be modified for different skill levels or topics. Instructors can make each pair segment longer or shorter, depending on how in-depth you would like the sharing to be.

Regardless of topic or depth, the key component should always remain the same: one person *only asking questions*, and the other person *only answering those questions honestly* (and then switch roles).