

KIT
KNOWLEDGEABLE
INSTRUCTOR TRAINING

M.T.S Coaching Skills

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES
FOR SAFER DRIVERS AND FASTER
DEVELOPMENT



QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

LEE JOWETT

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Leading

Open

Closed

Embedded

Effective

There is no doubt that questioning techniques are a key tool in an instructors toolbox. Asking the right question, at the right time can be the difference between the pupil joining up practise with previous experience and accelerating their learning, or simply practising and developing skills, whilst not fully understanding the overall importance.

Questions enable the instructor to get an insight into the extent of knowledge already obtained by the pupil, and also a deeper insight into the thoughts, feelings and beliefs of the client. Which in turn enables us to assist the client to understand themselves better, their thoughts and motivations so that they can self-manage more *effectively* post test. Most importantly the use of questions permits the instructor to be in control of the vehicle through areas of risk, enabling the pupil to remain focused on achieving their goal safely.

But which questions should you ask on the move? Which questions should you use at the side of the road? What is the purpose of the question you are asking and do you need to be asking questions whenever the car is moving?

In this ebook we are going to define each question type and look at the purpose of open, closed, leading, embedded and effective questions to help you to put your toolbox into order. Enabling you to better chose the right question at the right time, or indeed, know when silence is best served.

Lee Jowett

Closed Questions

Definition: Questions that have a limited bank of responses, not necessarily that they can be answered 'yes' or 'no' but have correct and incorrect answers (such as speed limits, road markings, lightings etc)

Purpose: The purpose of closed questions in Driver training should, ideally be, to target the knowledge or potentially improve knowledge and understanding in the pupil around the goal of the lesson.

When to use:

When setting up the goal for the session prior to moving off.

During reflection periods at the side of the road to improve knowledge and understanding

.

On the move, in a limited context, solely around the learning goals for the session, to help the pupil to develop.

Generally speaking closed questions require limited thought, targeting knowledge means the response is either known or unknown content. In this sense closed questions should be asked prior to practise around the goal, but can also be asked on the move in many instances.

.

Closed questions largely benefit the instructor as much as the pupil, since they enable us to understand any gaps in the learning, before the wheels turn or on the approach to risk. In addition filling in gaps in the pupils knowledge will doubtless enable them to better achieve the goal especially during practice.

At this point it is important to stress the DVSA's guidance on questioning on the move. We must move away from general Q&A while the car is moving, unless it benefits the learning goal of the session, or unless required to help maintain the safety of the vehicle, since responding to questions requires focus and in turn increases the attention deficit on the task, making learning less effective.

Example Q's :

What is the speed limit here?
What does the flashing amber light mean?
What is the best gear to use for this?

Why should you check your mirrors?
What will be a good speed to approach?
Would you signal on the approach for this exit?

Lee Jowett



Open (Effective) Questions

Definition: Open questions are questions with unlimited responses, where the questioner cannot possibly know what answer they will receive as they are not based around knowledge and information and typically cannot be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' response.

Purpose: The purpose of open questions is to help the learner to reflect on their performance. Effective open questions target the beliefs, emotions and attitudes that motivate behaviour.

When to use: Since the process of reflection requires much focus, it is important that these types of questions are generally asked at the side of the road. However at times it might be necessary to ask a simple, forward focussed, effective question (example below) to check your pupils emotional state on the move, therefore enabling you to manage any potential risk.

It's is not always easy to categorise a question as open or effective. How do you 'feel' that right turn went? Is not an effective question, as although it contains the word 'feel' within the question, the question itself is centred around the platform and as such the answer returned will centre around the behaviour and skill. It might be better to ask "tell me about that right turn?" As an open question instead, as this is less likely to receive a limited response, such as 'okay....good' and instead require the pupil to reflect more fully, in contrast to the initial question where more detail would likely require more questioning.

What we understand is that our feelings motivate our behaviour, so asking “how did you feel as you approached the right turn” is an effective question which enables the pupil to reflect not on the behaviour, but on their emotional state (good or bad) that produced the behaviour. Through further questioning we can then help our pupils to better understand the impact that their emotions (good and bad) will always have on their ability to drive well. This understanding is the starting point for drivers in the pursuit of safer driving through self-management. Without understanding what motivates good and bad driving it is simply impossible to produce good driving in all situations. The process of reflection here requires focus on the past, therefore reducing focus on the present, and as such, in general, it is safer for these questions to be asked at the side of the road.

Example Q's:

How are you feeling about this junction we are approaching? (Emotions)

What are your thoughts on the speed limit in this area? (Beliefs/attitudes)

What were you thinking about on the approach? (Thoughts/focus)

What will be different for you beyond the driving test? (Motivations)

Leading and Embedded Questions

Definition: Leading questions encourage a desired response. Embedded command questions subconsciously order the brain to respond in a certain way.

Purpose: To manage risk and keep the car safe.

When to use: On the move (time permitting.):

Leading questions are a call to action, to enable the learner to be responsible for the decision making process, by drawing their attention to an area of risk, they may not already be aware of. Therefore these types of questions can be extremely valuable to both parties, keeping the instructor in control of the safety of the vehicle and empowering the pupil to be responsible for their behaviour. We know that when a question illicit a response in the brain it fires nerve cells that create links in the hippocampus region linking the behaviour to the experience and enabling the brain to recall the response more quickly when it recognises a similar situation. The learning is more effective and efficient in this case than when the brain responds to simple commands and instruction.

Embedded command questions would ideally follow leading questions if necessary, however if time doesn't permit they may also precede leading questions and become the first response to an area of risk. In this case the learner would be pointed to the area of risk, and the necessary response but by way of a question, again enabling and triggering a decision in the brain by way of response and again ensuring that learning takes place efficiently. When asking these questions be sure to be extremely specific in what you are wanting them to manage. Being vague can lead to safety critical intervention being required as the learner focusses their attention on unnecessary objects (what can you see up ahead? Is not a leading question)

Lee Jowett

It must be stated that the overall safety of the vehicle and surrounding areas by far outweighs the importance of illiciting a response when managing risk. Therefore if time doesn't permit, or the desired response is not forthcoming then instruction would be preferable as an intervention. With physical intervention (duals etc) a last resort. Remember that a last resort can sometimes be the first and most appropriate action.

Example Q's:

Leading

What will you do about the cyclist up ahead?

Have you noticed the pedestrian at the crossing?

What lane will you need for this?

Embedded Command

When will you **slow down/move out/give space** for the cyclist?

When will you **BRAKE** for the crossing?

Are you going to **check it's safe to move** into the right hand lane?

On The Move Questions

Summary

While the wheels are turning focus is required on task. Questions should aid practise rather than impeded development. As such questions should be limited to:-

Closed Questions around the goal of the session, providing they will help the client achieve the goal and the situation is appropriate.

Leading and Embedded Command Questions to manage risk, giving your pupil enough time to make decisions and be in control, accelerating their learning and keeping the instructor in control of the safety of the vehicle.

Open Questions to manage risk. It might be necessary to check the thoughts or feelings of the learner, on the approach to a junction, for example, to help manage risk and determine the level of support provided. These should be well timed, short questions that can be answered simply...How are you feeling about this junction? (okay, great, nervous etc)

Open questions, in general, should be restricted to the side of the road, since they require too much focus and attention, as the purpose of an open question is to allow the pupil to explore their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions in depth.

The DVSA ADII encourages us to :

Remember it is an offence to use a mobile phone whilst driving because this is known to create a level of risk equivalent to or, in some cases, greater than driving whilst drunk. It cannot, therefore be good practice to constantly bombard the pupil with unnecessary questions

Lee Jowett



Side Of The Road Questions

Summary

At the side of the road the pupil can give full attention to the questions being asked and delve deeply into their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and emotions.

Closed questions to gauge and improve knowledge and understanding around the goal of the session, when setting up the goal for the session, after practice and when adapting.

Open questions particularly after practise during reflection periods, help the learner to understand how their thoughts, feelings and attitudes impact on their behaviour. Giving time in between practise enables the learner to connect the dots and leads to greater self-awareness. Enabling the learner to better self-manage their behaviour post test.

Leading questions should be limited to when the car is moving to manage risk, telling someone how to behave is not effective in the real world, helping someone to understand their own self, and the impact their personality traits and states, as well as emotions and distractions, will have on their ability to drive well is far more effective post test. Leading questions such as “don’t you think it’s dangerous to break the speed limit?” Are far more likely to cause your pupil to give you the answer they think you want, inhibiting them from exploring their thoughts.

An open question such as “How do you feel/What do you think...about people who break the speed limit?” is likely to be far more effective as a way in to your pupils thoughts and beliefs. Followed by a conversation using more open questions such as “is there a situation that you could be in, where you might have to break the speed limit?” and “How will you cope with that?” Later some closed questions around their own perception of the risks, “What are the risks here?” “How could that impact on you?”

Lee Jowett