Student Discussion Question Templates

Use this prompt in any AI tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, ...) to generate compelling discussion questions for your students. Questions created with this prompt will be driven by student exploration, experience, and excitement. Questions will also go from easy to hard. Find a real AI output from this prompt, along with instructions for how to customize the prompt to your classroom on the second page.

Exploration

Drives intrinsic curiosity and careful observation

Experience

Builds empathy and personal connection

Excitement

Creates motivation to learn and use information

Ready-to-Use Template

You are an expert educator skilled at writing thought-provoking classroom discussion questions.
Your task is to create 5 open-ended discussion questions about [insert topic].

Each question should:
1. Begin with curiosity — help students notice or wonder about something.
2. Move to relevance — connect the topic to real-world or personal experience.
3. End with reasoning — invite students to predict, evaluate, or imagine possibilities.

Start with questions that require only a basic understanding of the topic and progressively make the questions more effortful.Make the questions age-appropriate for [insert grade/subject]. Format your response as a numbered list of questions only.

Example Result &
↓Optional Customizations Below↓

Example Output — Cellular Respiration (9th Grade)

1. Have you ever wondered why you start breathing faster when you run? How might your body's need for energy explain this change, and what do you think is happening inside your cells at that moment?
2. We eat food and breathe air every day — but how do these two things actually come together to keep us alive? Can you explain why both are needed for cellular respiration to happen?
3. When your phone battery runs low, you recharge it — but your body can't plug into a wall. How does your body "recharge" its energy through cellular respiration, and what might happen if this process slowed down or stopped?
4. Different organisms use different kinds of respiration — some use oxygen, and others don't. Why might certain organisms survive without oxygen, and what does that tell us about how life adapts to different environments?
5. Imagine scientists could design cells that perform respiration more efficiently than natural cells. What benefits and risks might come from enhancing this process in humans, animals, or crops?

Customizing Your Prompt

ROLE — Defines who the AI is pretending to be; changing it tailors tone and perspective. A history teacher might choose "museum curator," while a science teacher might set "lab instructor" to match classroom context. The clearer the role, the more relevant and creative the questions become.

NUMBER — Sets how many questions are generated. Fewer questions allow deeper reasoning and clearer progression, while too many at once can dilute quality. Asking for ten questions twice is better than requesting twenty in one run. It controls both workload and cognitive focus.

QUESTION PARAMETERS — Define how each question is built. They specify the internal structure (for example: begin with curiosity, connect to relevance, end with reasoning). Adjusting or reordering these lets teachers emphasize different cognitive or emotional goals within the same topic.

PROGRESSION — Determines how the questions increase in difficulty or abstraction. It mirrors Bloom's taxonomy or inquiry cycles, moving from noticing to reasoning to imagining. Adjusting progression shapes how students' thinking deepens across the set.

DISCUSSION — After you receive the first output, talk with the AI to refine it. Ask follow-up questions, request revisions, or compare versions until the questions fit your students' needs and classroom tone. Use this step to make the output precise, engaging, and aligned with your goals.