

# Anatomy of a Great Discussion Question

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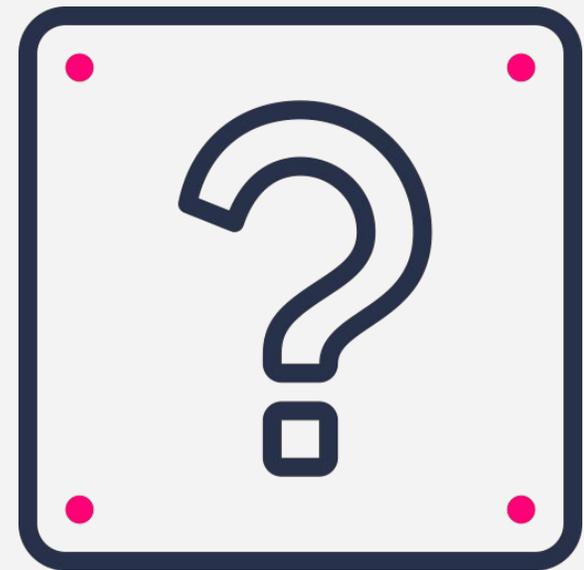
# Why make this guide?

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Teachers are busy people! So we created this simple but powerful step-by-step guide to help you create the best possible discussion prompts for Parlay RoundTables.

Think of this guide as a framework for creating prompts that encourage inquiry, challenge students to think bigger and connect the classroom to real world ideas and events.

Of course, it is not a prescription, but our recommendation for the best possible discussions on Parlay!



1

## Curriculum Connection

**Goal:** Ensure our discussion prompt meets educational requirements.

What are the key subjects, topics or concepts that we want students to explore in this RoundTable?

How do they relate to the curriculum or program requirements?

2

## Discussion Introduction

**Goal:** Generate student interest and demonstrate relevance.

Introduce the topic to your students in a short summary paragraph.

Why is this topic important to them and/or the world at large?

# 3

## Assignment Objectives

**Goal:** Help students understand what “success” looks like in this discussion.

What are the learning objectives of the RoundTable discussion?

What skills are they practicing?

**Pro-Tip:** Configure your Parlay Points to meet these expectations.

# 4

## Resources and Links

**Goal:** Provide resources to ensure a base of understanding / comprehension.

Provide supporting materials to teach or review the core academic concepts. This is great for a “flipped classroom” approach.

Link articles, videos, or other content that relates these concepts to the real-world.

See [Appendix 1](#) for a list of Parlay’s favourite online resources.

# 5

## Discussion Questions

**Goal:** Give ownership and creativity to the students. Encourage them to think critically.

What kind of questions are we asking? [See Appendix 2.](#)

Refer to the guidelines for great discussion questions in [Appendix 3.](#)

# 6

## Feedback Questions

**Goal:** Encourage meaningful interaction with others.

What kind of feedback do we want students to give and receive in this discussion? [See Appendix 3.](#)

How do the subject, grade level, and discussion questions influence?

# 7

## Sign Off

Conclude with a friendly, encouraging sign off. Ideally one that promotes meaningful and respectful interaction.

# Nice!

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Now you have a simple and repeatable framework for creating awesome Parlay RoundTables!

Have any questions? Something to add?  
Did we miss the mark somewhere?

Send us a note!

[Bobby@parlayideas.com](mailto:Bobby@parlayideas.com)

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# Appendix 1 - Online Sources



# Appendix 2.1 - Good Types of Questions

## **Moral/ethical dilemmas:**

Provide students with a problem or situation, and ask them to explore one or more of the moral and ethical concerns.

## **Assess → Diagnose → Act:**

Assessment: *What is the issue or problem at hand?*

Diagnosis: *What is the root cause of this issue or problem?*

Action: *How can we solve the issue?*

## **Compare and Contrast:**

Ask your students to make connections and identify differences between ideas that can be found in class texts, articles, images, videos and more etc.

## **Interpretive → Evaluative:**

Begin with questions about the intentions or goals of the author, creator, character etc. Then ask students evaluate the veracity of these intentions, and finally the effectiveness of the methods used.

## **Conceptual Changes:**

Introduce students to a new concept or idea, then ask them to search online to find a common misconception about this topic and explain it in their response.

## **Personal Exploration:**

Let students explore a new idea on their own terms and explore what it means to them as individuals. This creative freedom helps them find their authentic voice.

*“What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean to you?” or “Find an example of...”*

# Appendix 2.2 - Questions to Avoid

## **Yes/No Questions:**

Any question that can be answered with a simple yes or no tends to limit the depth and complexity of the discussion that ensues.

## **Elliptical Questions:**

This is the opposite of the yes/no question. If the question is too vague it does not provide enough structure for your students.

*“What do you think about...”*

## **Leading Questions:**

These are questions that have a bias built right in, and discourage students from taking risks with their ideas.

*“Don’t you think that...”*

*“Wouldn’t you agree that...?”*

# Appendix 3 - Additional Guidelines

## Try out these verbs in your discussion prompt:

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Compare	Observe
Relate	Evaluate
Contrast	Decide
Differ	Conclude
Predict	Notice
Consider	Summarize
Distinguish	Identify
Explain	Infer
Escribe	Remember
Propose	Visualize (“see”)

## Use these as starting points for your guided feedback questions:

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- Is there anything that you didn't understand?
- What did you like about the response?
- What do you think could be improved?
- Compare and contrast.
- Agree or disagree (offer an opinion).
- Reflect and respond.
- Investigate (using sources) and challenge.
- Inquire further into a response.
- Consider real world applications.
- Consider moral implications of response.
- Relate response to personal experience.
- Build upon their points.

# References and Additional Resources

[Harvard Business School - Questions for Class Discussions](#)

[Faculty Focus - Prompts that Get Students to Analyze, Reflect, Relate and Question](#)

[Stanford School of Education - Master Effective Questions](#)

[York Region District School Board - Seminar Success](#)

[ASCD - Strengthening Student Engagement](#)

[McMurry University - Discussion Questions that Work](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Education - Asking Effective Questions](#)

[C3 Teachers - Questions Frameworks and Classrooms](#)