

Follow-up Targets

Once an instructor has begun to use questioning as a pedagogical technique and not just as a moment to quiz students, changes occur in the classroom. Instruction is no longer just faculty driven. Student input—and student interest—now play a role in learning interactions.

Targeted questions help develop this new environment. As we saw previously, directing questions to specific students changes the nature of the class to one where conversations and discussion are beginning to emerge, monologues are disappearing. Moreover, the conversations and discussions are based on the content knowledge, as they are driven by specific intentional questions to particular students.

However, talk in and of itself does not necessarily raise the bar of critical thinking. As Bloom informs us, discussion is little more than comprehension. To assist students' meaning-making processes, we need to move the discussion up the taxonomy toward analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. A good way to accomplish that is through **Follow-Up Targets**.

Follow-Up Targets, as you can guess, are born of *targeted questioning*. Indeed, they use the same basic strategy of selecting a student and then asking that student a question. However, their ability to expand the interactive nature of the instruction is greater.

As the name implies, these questions follow the initial *targeted question*. Consequently, they not only require that the student pay attention to the material (and questions) being presented by the instructor, but also that she pay attention to the previous student's reply. For example, a follow-up target scenario might proceed like this: "Justin, what makes the treatment procedure just described by Gillian the right choice?" Or: "Jenny, what other possible diagnoses could we add to David's differential?" In both situations, Justin and Jenny must answer based on content and on the response given by a fellow student, hence the interactive nature of the conversation increases.

What is nice about **Follow-Up Targets** is that they can be created on the fly. When a particular response to a *targeted question* opens up a new avenue of discussion, new questions can be asked almost immediately. When skills in this questioning technique are honed, students can be guided toward critically evaluative thinking in the learning session.



Like *targeted questioning*, **follow-up targets**:

- Identify specific content knowledge for critical thinking
 - Identify specific students for engaged learning
 - Help build reflective skills (all students think about a question targeted for another learner, evaluating whether they could have answered it as well)
- Increase the interaction between students and faculty in learning environments

Moreover, they:

- Develop students' evaluative thinking
- Connect students with other students in the learning environment
- Help develop the skill of 'thinking-on-one's-feet'

Learning the proper use of **follow-up targets** can come after you have developed a significant skill at using *targeted questioning*, or it can be developed concurrent with that process. As both skills essentially follow the same structural pattern, only a little shift in style is needed to make the transition from the one to the other. Some of you will want to go more slowly, as direct questioning of students will be a significant alteration to your teaching methods, but others may find that combining the two processes makes the most sense.