Strategies for Understanding the Question

Option 1: Ask the student to rephrase the question

Explain the problem (select one):

- I don’t understand what you mean by ______ (insert word or phrase)...
- I’m not sure whether I understand your question...
- I’m afraid that I’m unclear about your question...
- I’m a bit confused...
- I’m not sure I completely understand...

Make a request (select one):

- ...could you explain it to me?
- ...could you repeat it?
- ... could you rephrase it?
- ...would you mind clarifying what you said?
- ...would you mind explaining it again?

Other ideas for strategies/ Notes:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Option 2: Ask another student to rephrase the question for you

- Can someone help out by rephrasing the question for me?
- Is there anyone that understands what he/she is asking that could rephrase the question for me?
- Can someone that is clear about the question explain it to me?
- Is there anyone that can explain the question for me using an example?
- I do not understand what you mean by ________ (insert word or phrase), can someone help explain its meaning to me?

Option 3: Attempt to restate your understanding of the question

- I’m not sure if I understood you correctly but it sounds like you are asking __________________ (restate question). Is that correct?
- I’m a little confused, are you asking me if ____________________ (restate question). Did I understand you correctly?
- If I understood you correctly you are asking if ____________________ (restate question). Is that right?
Navigating and Deflecting the Question

Chart 1. Navigate and deflect too broad or off-topic questions

The question is too broad

Explain that the question is good, then...
- Ask student to come to office hours
- Ask student to stay after class to discuss the question
- Ask student to email question

Chart 2. Navigate and deflect irrelevant questions

Is the question irrelevant?

I would be happy to talk about that further, then...
- Ask student to come to office hours
- Ask student to stay after class to discuss the question
- Ask student to email question

Chart 3. Navigate and deflect offensive questions

The question is offensive

Explain that the question is off topic and will not be discussed
What if you understand a student’s question but don’t know the answer?

- Not every question requires an immediate answer!
  - You just need to know how to handle your class and students.
  - There are many good ways of answering questions!
- What to say when you don’t know the answer...
  1. That’s a very good question! But, honestly, I don’t know the answer right now. Could you email that question to me? I need some time to think about it. I will get back to you soon.
  2. Does anyone know the answer? I want to hear what others think.
  3. I like your question, but I’ve never thought about that before. I will let you know.

Creating a Question-friendly Environment

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<td>Face your students</td>
<td>Call on a different students</td>
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