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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<tr>
<th>BODY LANGUAGE</th>
<th>Answer a variety</th>
<th>Reputation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Make eye contact</td>
<td>Call on a different students</td>
<td>Attention to students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Face your students</td>
<td>Reiterate office hours</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
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<td>Be approachable</td>
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<th>EQUAL OPPORTUNITY</th>
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