

Question-ables

The aim of these materials is to teach the students the so-called ‘W’ question words, plus “How”, and give them practice using these to compose their own questions.

In the 10th rank, students learn how to answer six basic questions. Once they’ve become proficient at this we can introduce the Question-able flash cards at any time. They’re flashed in the standard fashion over a period of several weeks or months. We follow our progression of T-Ss-T, Ss-T and finally team or individual output using flash card games. As with any flash card set, it’s important to relate them to the students’ real lives, so we intersperse questions using the featured words.



Once the students understand the meanings, we hand out a mark-off sheet (available as a free download from the PLS website) to each student. These help them learn to recognize, say, read, spell, and use the question words.

General Rules:

- At each stage, when a student is successful they circle the left-most un-circled number. If they are unsuccessful, we correct appropriately, and have them try the same word when next called upon (Steps 2 to 7).
- Each student may only circle one number, per word, per week.
- Students may not follow one another with the same question word (Steps 2, 4 and 5).

Progression:

1. Listen, find (*Japanese side up*)

Each student holds up their sheet so the others cannot see it. We say a ‘W’ question word in English and they try to find the corresponding Japanese. Count down ‘Three, two, one, go!’—as you count down, students search for the word on their raised paper and put their finger on it—and when you get to ‘Go!’ they put their sheet down on the table, with their finger pointing at their chosen answer. This technique allows us to check the comprehension of all, with no (or little) possibility of kids cribbing from their neighbors. After a few rounds, be sure to redo any words which several students have had trouble with.

2. Point, translate (*Japanese side up*)

Students individually point to a Japanese word and say the English equivalent with correct pronunciation.

3. Form real question (*English side up*)

Students point to a word and then ask a question of a classmate or teacher using that word. Each question may be used only asked once per week.

4. Read, translate (*English side up*)

Students point to a word, read it aloud and say the Japanese.

5. Translate, spell (*Japanese side up*)

Students point to a word, pronounce the English equivalent and then spell it.

6. Write English (*Japanese side up*)

Students write the English words in their notebooks.

7. Write English question (*English side up*)

Students point to a word then write a question using it and a possible answer in their notebooks. A more challenging option is to use reported speech e.g., 'I asked my friend what he wanted to drink but he said he wasn't thirsty.'

For Steps 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 the teacher should ask a question using the word after each successful effort. This helps students understand how they're used in context, and prepares them for steps 3 and 7.

We believe these flashcards and follow-up sheets, especially when connected with their real lives through appropriate questioning by us, can help students learn, retain, and use the tricky 'W'-question words. If you're sick of quizzical looks when asking questions to your students, try them out!

Notes

- If your students have some reading and writing ability you may wish to do one or all of Steps 4 to 6 before doing Step 3, or you may choose to switch every few weeks or so.
- Lower-level students should attempt just one step per week. However, with higher levels, doing two or three in a class would be advisable depending on their performance.
- In subsequent weeks it is acceptable, and perhaps even desirable, for some students to be doing different steps. The teacher can sometimes just super-

vise. For example, if one student is on Step 2, and the others are still doing Step 1, the student on Step 2 could stand next to the teacher and call out words in English for the others to find.

- As the Questionable sheets are primarily an in-class material (although resourceful teachers may find a suitable way to use them as homework) there is no need for the students to keep their sheets in their files. You'll save 'rummaging' time if you keep them in your class file.
- Space on the sheets is limited so there is nowhere to write names on them. Write students' initials in the top-right hand corner of the sheets to keep track of whose is whose.