






Depth and Complexity: An Introduction

The eleven prompts of Depth and Complexity¹ are designed to move students towards expert thinking. Each prompt is a lens to focus students on a particular aspect of a topic. They should be paired with high-levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, but *every* PDF out there uses only low-level questions.







Below are icons, definitions, and higher-level sample questions focused on the teaching profession.

For icons, we've used emoji representations. Why? These are accessible to students, freely available on every tech platform, easy to type, not owned by one company², and, yes, just plain fun to use. You can read more about [using emoji icons here](https://byrdseed.com/dc-emoji/) (byrdseed.com/dc-emoji/).

Icon	Name	Description	Sample Question
	Big Idea	An overarching statement about a topic. Moves students towards abstraction and away from specifics.	What was your purpose for teaching? Does it match your purpose today?
	Essential Details	The most important specifics about a topic. Moves students away from abstraction and towards evidence.	Cite five specific incidents that show your actions back up your stated purpose. Cite one that contradicts your purpose.
	Language of the Discipline	The vocabulary an expert would use to discuss their field. Can include acronyms, jargon, phrases, names of tools, or even important people.	Can you identify a term which has fallen out of favor in education – only to return later?
	Rules	The laws, hierarchies, norms, etc within a topic. These are things that we expect to be followed. Rules can be broken, but it will lead to consequences.	How do the expectations for elementary teachers differ from the expectations for secondary teachers? Are these differences justified?
	Patterns	Things we expect to repeat within a topic. A pattern can break without necessarily creating a problem.	What are your favorite days of the school year? In what way do they represent broken patterns?
	Ethics	The problems, ambiguities, or dilemmas of a topic. Students should be considering pros and cons, resolving issues of fairness, or pondering "What is <i>right</i> ?"	What have you been asked to do by a boss that you disagreed with? Was it right or wrong to obey?

¹ Originally developed by Bette Gould and Sandra Kaplan.

² The emoji I've used here are from Twitter, who graciously open-sourced their library.

	Change Over Time	Takes students broader, asking them to consider how a topic has changed (or not changed) as time has passed.	What procedures were forced upon you at one point in your teaching career only to be forbidden later?
	Multiple Perspectives	Takes student broader, asking them to consider the same topic from different points of view including specific people, groups of people, plants or animals, or even inanimate objects.	Contrast a  teacher, principal, and student's perspective of a new school rule. What is unique to each person's point of view?
	Unanswered Questions	The things about a topic which we currently do not know enough about or, possibly, <i>cannot</i> know about.	How will electronic testing impact students' long-term success?
	Across Disciplines	How does this topic represent an intersection of other fields? How do language arts and math appear in a topic? Also, consider how the topics cross within one discipline: how is this topic both geometry <i>and</i> statistics?	What have you learned from meeting with teachers from other grade level/content areas? What did you teach them?
	Trends	How is a topic currently changing and what forces are causing those changes?	How is a rise in screen time affecting students' emotional health?

Yours,
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PS: You can also check out our book about the *entire* Depth and Complexity framework: giftedguild.com (Yes, there's way way more than these 11 prompts).