

CPD Level 2 – Lesson 10: Questioning for Critical Thinking

Learning Objectives (for the Coach)

By the end of this lesson, the coach should be able to:

- Use questioning techniques to develop reflective and self-aware players.
- Shift from directive or corrective coaching to exploratory, problem-solving dialogue.
- Encourage independent thinking and decision-making during practice and competition.

Background

Critical thinking is the cornerstone of advanced player development. While technical feedback remains important, high-level coaching requires athletes to think for themselves — to analyse, adapt, and apply learning independently.

Questioning is the most powerful tool a coach has to unlock this mindset. By asking the right questions at the right time, coaches help players:

- Understand the “why” behind performance.
- Analyse cause and effect in their shots and tactical choices.
- Develop self-awareness and ownership of learning.

The transition from “telling” to “asking” reflects the evolution of a coach from instructor to facilitator. This lesson focuses on how to design, deliver, and time effective questions that challenge bowlers to reason, reflect, and make autonomous decisions on and off the rink.

Practical Activities

1. Workshop: The Art of the Question (20 minutes – Classroom or Clubroom)

Activity: Explore questioning types and their effects.

- In pairs, one coach gives direct instructions (“You’re stepping too early”).
- Then repeat the same feedback as a question (“What happens when you step earlier in your delivery?”).

Discussion Points:

- How does each approach change player engagement?
- Which method promotes thinking rather than compliance?

Key Learning:

Effective questioning is open, curious, and timed with purpose. Use the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options, Way Forward) as a structure to guide conversations.

2. Rink-Based Practical: Guided Discovery (40 minutes)

Activity A: Technical Reflection Drill

- Set up a short head-building scenario.
- After every end, instead of giving feedback, ask:

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- What worked best in that end?
- What would you try differently next time?
- How did your choice of hand affect your line?

Coach Focus: Listen carefully; allow silence; avoid rescuing players with answers.

Activity B: Tactical Reasoning Game

- Create a game situation: 1 down with two bowls to play.
- Ask players to discuss options and justify their shot selection.
- Encourage the group to question each other: "Why that shot?" "What's the risk?"

Coach Role: Facilitate, don't dominate.

Activity C: Reflection in Motion

- During a live practice, pause one end and ask:
 - What's happening here?
 - What options do we have?
 - What are we trying to achieve on this end?

This activity builds match-awareness and tactical reasoning.

3. Question Design Practice (20 minutes)

Task: In small groups, design 5 purposeful questions for:

- Technical skill refinement (e.g., delivery, balance, follow-through).
- Tactical decision-making (e.g., shot selection, head-building).
- Emotional control (e.g., handling frustration or pressure).

Review as a group:

- Which questions provoke the most thought?
- Are they open (invite thinking) or closed (invite compliance)?
- How can tone and timing influence response?

Questioning Prompts

Examples of powerful, open-ended questions:

- What did you notice about your bowl's line after release?
- Why do you think that shot worked better than your last one?
- What was your plan for that end — did it work?
- What did you see before you chose that shot?
- How could you adapt that approach if the green was faster?
- What would you tell another player if they faced the same situation?

Self-Discovery Prompts for Players:

- What are you most pleased with today?
- Where do you think you improved most?

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- What one thing will you work on next session?

Coach Notes (Ethics, Inclusivity, Safety)

- Respect learning differences: some players need time to process before answering — don't rush responses.
- Maintain positive tone: avoid using questioning as criticism. Focus on exploration, not interrogation.
- Ensure inclusion: involve quieter players in discussions and value diverse perspectives.
- Emotional safety: balance challenge with support — never use questioning to embarrass or undermine confidence.
- Ethical feedback: always follow up critical questions with encouragement or constructive next steps.

Reflection (Self + Peer)

Self-Reflection Prompts:

- How often did I ask open vs. closed questions?
- Did my questions promote genuine player reflection or lead them to a specific answer?
- How did players respond — did they think aloud, question themselves, or stay passive?
- What could I do differently to create more independent thinkers?

Peer/Senior Coach Feedback:

- Evaluate how effectively questions guided reflection.
- Comment on tone, listening skills, and timing of interventions.
- Provide one suggestion to deepen the use of inquiry in future sessions.

Outcomes

After completing Lesson 10, the coach will be able to:

- Use questioning techniques that promote reflection, problem-solving, and ownership in athletes.
- Shift naturally from instruction to guided discovery coaching.
- Foster an environment of critical thinking and self-analysis.
- Encourage players to self-correct and strategize independently.
- Demonstrate emotional intelligence and patience in facilitating player-led learning.

