



Questionnaires: how to make 'em useful

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What are we trying to do?
What are we practising?

- Are we practising the question forms?
- Are we practising the answers?
- Are we concentrating on fluency?

Or

- Are we concentrating on accuracy?

For what it's worth...

- I think of questionnaires as “semi-controlled practice”.
- There is repetition (controlled practice) and there can be the chance for a personalised answer (free practice).
- Some questionnaires that appear in low level coursebooks are almost “drills” – in both question and answer. (I don't necessarily see this as a negative)
- EG1. “Do you like....?” Yes, I do / No. I don't.
- EG2. “How often do you....?”

Typical low level questionnaire:

Do you like + ing....?

Do you like.....?

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4
Playing tennis				
Swimming				
Going to the cinema				
Eating pizza				
Cycling				
Reading novels				
Meeting friends				



Do we need to improve it?

How can we improve it?

Simple improvements

- Put the verb in the base form.
- Then the students have to do some kind of manipulation
- I would also allow two spaces in the table for the students to create their own question.
- Once they have some language, I encourage students to ask a follow up question.

Perhaps “how often do you...?” or “when was the last time you....?”

How about a STAR answer?

- For example in a Superlative + Present Perfect questionnaire, or if the students have to tell a story, the answers could be given in the STAR format.
- Situation: the context
- Task: what were you doing
- Action: what happened – the main purpose of the story
- Result: what happened at the end or what was the new “normality”
- This allows for longer turns of speaking

Questions

- What happens after the questionnaire?
 - How should we set the questionnaire up?
 - Where do the questions come from?
 - Do we give the full questions or just prompts?
 - Do we just ask the students to “find the following information”?
 - What is the teacher’s role?
 - Who answers the questions?
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- Let’s consider these questions.

How should we set up the activity?

- The key word is “modelling”.
- How about creating a column on the questionnaire for the teacher?
- Students can ask some of the questions to the teacher in Open Class. The teacher can answer and demonstrate what the students should write down.
- With a slower group, I would then ask two reliable students to demonstrate.

How should we manage the activity?

Mingling?

Sitting next to each other and rotating pairs?

Sitting opposite each other?

Group work?

Difficult to answer this without knowing your teaching context, class culture and school rules.

What happens after the questionnaire?

- A lot of coursebooks will say “tell your partner about what you discovered”
- While this ok, what about other ways to feedback?
- Collect the data
- Written report (IELTS style writing)
- Making your own graphs
- Creating presentations
- Using e-technology, the questionnaires could be set up on Survey Monkey or other sites.

What's the teacher's role?

- There are many:
- Creator
- Model
- Passive monitor
- Nudger
- Pair-maker
- My basic feeling is that a questionnaire is where the teacher can step back and allow the students to fill the space.

Where do the questions come from?

- Obvious answer: either the student, the coursebook or the teacher.
- If from the teacher: do we provide the questions in full, or do we expect the students to do a bit of work?
- Eg. A questionnaire based on “Have you ever..?”, have the main verb in the base form.

- If from the student, what help do we give them?
- If from the coursebook, are they relevant?

Examples of questionnaire

- Simple tick box
- Information gathering
- Telegrammed questions
- Same questions/different questions
- Role played / real person
- Sit down or mingle (Mingle = more columns and perhaps less info)

While we're on the subject...

- Teacher Action Research
- Questionnaires for students – course feedback
- Marketing questionnaires to inform school business managers or marketeers
- Staff questionnaires
- Parent questionnaires

What do you do / What have you done?

- Do you use questionnaires?
- Do you have any ideas that I can steal? 😊