

# SOCRATIC METHOD



## HELPFUL LINKS

[Introduction to the Socratic Method](#)

[Socratic Method Examples and Quiz](#)

[Socratic Method Overview in Law Classrooms](#)

## WHAT IS THE SOCRATIC METHOD?

The Socratic method is an ancient learning and discussion technique named after the Greek philosopher Socrates. The socratic method relies on a form of dialogue between instructor and students, where the instructor presents an issue, and then asks probing questions to stimulate critical thinking and promote discussion, which ensures that the students fully understand the topic or issue.

The Socratic method is widely used on college campuses, and is adaptable for use in a variety of settings, including both large and small groups, science courses, and online learning platforms (1,2), and can result in deep learning (2).

Students using the Socratic method have showed increased exam scores and increased learning satisfaction compared to more traditional lecture styles (3)

1 Whiteley, T. R. (2006). Using the Socratic method and Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain to enhance online discussion, critical thinking, and student learning. 33.

2 Holme, T. A. (1992). Using the Socratic method in large lecture courses: Increasing student interest and involvement by forming instantaneous groups. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 69(12), 974. <https://doi.org/10.1021/ed069p974>

3 Adib-Hajbaghery, M., & Aghajani, M. (2011). Traditional Lectures, Socratic Method And Student Lectures: Which One Do The Students Prefer? <http://www.webmedcentral.com/>

# STEPS OF THE SOCRATIC METHOD

## STEP ONE: PRESENT TOPIC

**Presenter:** Present the research topic, or discussion topic.

**Audience:** Listen, consider the assumptions and nuances.

### Example:

Present a research plan, hypothesis, topic, definition, argument, position, opinion, etc to the group.

## STEP TWO: PROBING QUESTIONS

**Presenter:** Listen and respond.

**Audience:** Ask questions to examine the assumptions and premises of the original topic. Ask exploratory questions.

### Example:

There are six main types of socratic questions:

1. Clarifying questions: "What did you mean by that?"
2. Questions to probe assumptions: "What assumptions are you making?" / "Why do you assume that?"
3. Examining evidence: "How do we know that?" / "What have other studies found?"
4. Questioning perspective: "How did you develop this perspective?" / "What makes this approach better than the alternative?"
5. Exploring consequences: "What happens if you are correct? If you are incorrect?"
6. Questioning questions: "Why did you ask that question?" / "What do you think I'm trying to get at by asking this question?"

## STEP THREE: REFRAMING

**Presenter:** Present the reframed statement or plan.

**Audience:** Consider how to further refine the new statement.

### Example:

Reformulate the original hypothesis, opinion, or statement in light of the new understanding gained from the questioning period.