

**Instruction Checking Questions (ICQs)** in ELT are used to ensure that students have understood the teacher's instructions for an activity or task. They help scaffold understanding by confirming that students know what to do and how to do it. Here is how to use ICQs effectively:

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### 1. Give clear and concise instructions first

- Before asking ICQs, provide instructions using simple language, visual aids, and gestures if necessary.

Example:

- "Work in pairs and write three sentences about your weekend."
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### 2. Plan your ICQs in advance

- Think about potential areas of confusion and prepare questions to check those specific points.

Example for the instruction above:

- Are you working alone or with a partner? (With a partner)
  - How many sentences will you write? (Three)
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### 3. Focus on key details

- Ask about the critical aspects of the task (e.g., group size, expected output, time limit).

Example for "Write the answers on the board in groups of three":

- How many people are in each group? (Three)
  - Where will you write the answers? (On the board)
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### 4. Use simple, direct language

- Keep ICQs brief and aligned with the students' language level.

**Weak ICQ:** "Do you think you can complete this activity within the given timeframe in groups of three?" **Better ICQ:** "How much time do you have? (5 minutes) Are you working alone or in groups? (In groups)"

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## 5. Check understanding interactively

- Use yes/no, either/or, or short-answer questions. Avoid open-ended questions that might confuse students.
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## 6. Model the task if needed

- If instructions are complex, demonstrate the task and then check understanding with ICQs.
  - Example:
    - Instruction: "Match the words to the pictures."
    - ICQ: "Are you matching words to numbers? (No) What are you matching? (Words to pictures)"
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## 7. Encourage peer clarification

- If one student answers an ICQ incorrectly, ask another student to clarify to scaffold understanding for the whole group.
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## 8. Use visuals, gestures, or written cues

- Combine verbal ICQs with visual aids or physical actions to make the task clear.

Example:

- Instruction: "Circle the correct answer."
  - ICQ: Point to the task and ask: "Are you drawing or circling? (Circling)"
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## 9. Check timing and expectations

- Include time-related ICQs to ensure students know the time limit.
  - Example:
    - "How much time do you have? (10 minutes)"
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## 10. Provide feedback and adapt

- If students still seem unclear, rephrase your instructions and ICQs, or demonstrate the task again.

By ensuring your ICQs are clear, targeted, and level-appropriate, you help scaffold understanding and set students up for success in completing the task.