

## Stretch It

A Cognitive Capacity building move that requires students to elaborate on their thinking.

### Overview:

As students respond to a question posed by the teacher, instead of the teacher responding "yes" or "no" and moving on, the teacher stretches student thinking by asking follow-up questions intended to help the students elaborate and go deeper with their thinking.

### Purpose:

The Stretch It instructional move involves the practice of rewarding right answers with hard questions, expecting the students to elaborate on their thinking, and demonstrating the teacher's interest in students' thinking. It is used to push students beyond their most immediate and obvious response to find and articulate connections, justifications, and the correct use of academic vocabulary. It is an important move to support differentiation within the classroom as the teacher can tailor the "stretch it" questions to the learning needs of individual students. This kind of questioning keeps students engaged and sends the message that their teacher believes deeply in their intellectual capacity.

### Application: When and where can I use it?

The Stretch It move can be used at any grade level and within any content area as it communicates to students the value of thinking and communicating precisely about the content at hand. The Stretch It technique describes the process of getting more from your students by asking follow up questions. These questions should be harder and should require elaboration on the answer to the first question.

### Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Stretch It works in the classroom because the students are continuously engaged within the classroom using positive reinforcement and differentiated instruction. Instead of students passively sitting in class and hearing "yes" or "no" to their answers they are encouraged to come up with substantial evidence as to why the answer is right or wrong.

It may be important to prepare your students for the types of questions you will be asking and the responses you are looking for. It is also recommended to use this technique in a fun, non-stressful way by keeping a positive attitude and using words of encouragement.

There are different categories of questions you should consider using as you stretch your students' thinking:

- **Ask “How?” or “Why?”** – asking students to elaborate on how or why they answered the way they did will increase their mastery of the content
- **Ask for another way** – often there are multiple ways to answer a question or different strategies that can be applied to the same problem. Asking students to think about a different approach develops flexibility in their thinking and helps them find and use the most efficient strategies
- **Ask for precise words** – offering students opportunities to use more specific words and incorporate new academic vocabulary into their responses can develop student's confidence in their thinking and support mastery of new words
- **Ask for evidence** – by asking students to describe evidence that supports their conclusion, you emphasize the process of building and supporting sound arguments
- **Ask for more than one skill** - asking students to integrate information from previous learning to answer a question is a great way to practice different skills and make connections
- **Connect the answer to a different setting** - ask students to relate information in their answer to something else in the world

Asking these types of rigorous directive Stretch It questions is likely, over time, to teach students to think more productively about developing their own answers. Then, when you stretch those students with less directive prompts (“Say more.” “Keep going.”) they are likely to do so, out of habit, in rigorous ways.

Learning Mindsets: Perseveres through challenges

Learning Mindsets: *Takes academic risks*

### Learn more about this Instructional Move:

[Technique 13: Stretch It - Teach like a champion \(weebly.com\)](https://www.weebly.com/technique-13-stretch-it-teach-like-a-champion)

[Strengthening Student Learning with the Stretch It Technique - YouTube](#)

[Teach Like a Champion Technique 3 - Stretch It - YouTube](#) (this is a video explanation; it does not show the move in action with students)

### References:

Lemov, D. Teach Like a Champion 3.0. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass, 2021