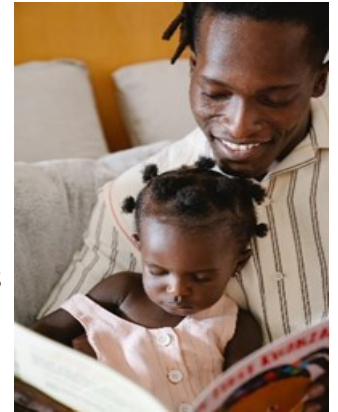


Supporting children to answer questions/requests (Blanks Levels)

As children grow, they develop verbal reasoning skills. This is the ability to answer different types of questions. Younger children will be able to give simple, concrete information relating to what they can see in the here and now. Older children learn to answer more complex questions that call for more abstract thinking.

Marion Blank studied the types of questions that teachers ask in the classroom and discovered that there are four different levels of questions used (Blanks Levels Questions). It is important that adults match the level of language they use to the level of questions that the child can understand. This is something that parents can try at home to support their child.



Level 1 – Look at it (age 2-3)

At this level children can answer simple questions about something they can see or hear (e.g. a picture book they are sharing with an adult.) Adults should try to **keep questions simple** and relate them to whole objects. Questions often involve naming or matching.

Example Questions:

- What is this? Who is that?
- What can you hear? Point to the...
- Find me the...

Level 2 – Talk about it (age 3-4)

At level 2 children learn **to focus in on specific details**. Questions still relate to something they can see in front of them or an event in the here and now. Example questions:

- Who/What/Where? (remembering information)
- What size/shape/colour is....?
- How are these different?
- What is X doing?
- Find me something that has wheels.
- Finish a sentence: "We drive a...."
- Show me something we use for writing
- How many?



Level 3 – Think about it (age 4-5)

At this level children learn to think about things in different ways. They can answer questions that are not directly related to what they can see/hear/feel. Success depends on the child doing something extra with the information or drawing on their own background knowledge.

Example questions:

- How do you make a sandwich?
- Tell me how these are the same
- Giving definitions: "What is a party?"
- How is X feeling?
- Imagining the role of someone else: "what might X say?"
- Questions that exclude something: "tell me an animal that we don't ride"
- Making predictions: "What do you think will happen next?"
- Tell me the story



Level 4 – reasoning (age 5+)

At level 4 children need to be able to **talk about why things happen**. They can answer questions that need them to explain or give reasons for something. Children are also able to use language to give a solution to a problem.

Example questions:

- Why can't we eat something we picked up off the floor?
- What will happen if....
- What could she do if she loses her school bag?
- How do you know X is feeling angry?
- Why should we use a pencil to write maths problems?



Top Tips

At all levels, if your child does not understand you there are several ways you can help.

- ⇒ Repeat the question again, allowing enough time for your child to answer
- ⇒ Simplify the question or break it down into parts
- ⇒ Focus attention: make sure the child is listening to you/looking in the right place
- ⇒ Offer alternatives: "What is he doing? Is he reading or climbing?"
- ⇒ Use gestures to help your child understand or to give a hint for the correct answer
- ⇒ Give most of the sentence and let your child fill in the rest: "What colour is it? It's..."
- ⇒ Give the first sound or first syllable of the answer