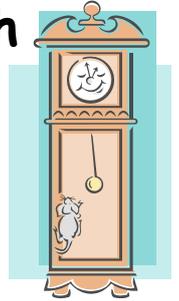


Speech and Language Therapy Activities Understanding of Language

Learning to understand questions through story time



The questions below can be adapted to any activity. Story time is always a good activity to start with, but you can also practise asking questions during other activities, for example when playing in the home corner, when playing with dolls houses or Lego and Playmobil, and when taking part in craft activities such as painting and play dough.

It is important to ask questions at a level that your child can understand. If your child is finding it difficult to answer a question, try simplifying it for them.

To help your child understand questions at a higher level practice asking the questions and if they find it difficult to answer model an appropriate answer for them.



For example, if you are looking at a book together, ask "what's happening in the picture?" Pause and if necessary model the language needed to verbalise the answer e.g. "what's happening in the picture? The boy is planting some seeds".

More strategies to use:

- Give your child a sentence to complete, for example "where's the princess?" "the princess is in the ..."
- Use visual cues such as pointing to focus your child's attention
- Give your child a forced alternative, for example "are they at the farm or at the swimming pool?"
-Lots of practise and repetitions!



The information below will give you an idea of the sort of questions you could ask during activities such as when reading a book together.

Level 1

At this level your child should be able to answer questions that relate to objects they can see e.g. "what's that?", "show me the dog?"

Developing language at level 2

At this level a child is encouraged to focus on objects and situations in more detail. For example thinking about different features and characteristics

You could ask questions such as:

Type of question	Examples
Thinking about the function of objects	<i>What could you drink?</i>
Completing sentences	<i>You water the garden with a.....</i>
Things that go together	<i>What goes with knife?</i>
Sorting and categorising. Give an example with objects in sight	<i>What else can grow in the ground? Name another fruit (child can see the objects)</i>
Focusing on concepts e.g. colour, size, number	<i>Find a green bird Find a big animal Find two flowers</i>
Describing a scene	<i>What's happening? What's happening in the picture?</i>
Showing a picture or giving information and asking:	<i>'Mum planted bulbs in the garden'</i>
Who?	<i>Who planted the bulbs?</i>
What?	<i>What did she plant?</i>
Where?	<i>Where was she?</i>



Developing language at level 3

At this level the child focuses on the object in its environment.

You could ask questions such as:

Type of question	Example
Ask your child to follow a set of directions	<i>Put the bulb in the top, add soil with the trowel and tap it down</i>
Give another example BUT listen to extra conditions	<i>Find me something else you can drink from that is not made of plastic</i>
Narrative/re-telling events	
Ask your child to arrange	

pictures in a sequence	
Ask your child to tell a story or re-tell an event	<i>Tell me how to plant a bulb</i>
Summarise the story in one sentence	<i>What have you done?</i>
Predict	<i>What might happen next?</i>
What does a character say?	<i>(Looking at picture) What does mum say?</i>
How does a character feel?	<i>(Looking at picture) How does mum feel?</i>
Define a word	<i>What does 'sow' mean?</i>



References

Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978). *The language of learning: the preschool years*. New York: Gurne and Stratton Inc.

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