
Asking and Answering Wh- Questions

Answering questions is a complex language task. Students must understand the vocabulary and the meaning of the question. They must understand that when someone asks you a question, you are expected to give an appropriate response. Different types of questions demand different types of responses. A further expectation is that many questions that could be answered with a simple *yes* or *no* actually require further elaboration to explain the rationale for the answer.

Why do some children have difficulty asking question?

- They do not know how to put words together to form questions
- They do not have the thinking skills to successfully request information
- They do not know how to ask questions to get the most information from their listener.

All three areas influence each other. A child must have abilities in all areas in order to be successful at asking question to get information.

What, Where and Who questions are the easiest type of questions for children to understand. They are tied to names and locations of people and things in the child's environment. **When** questions require that a child has some concept of time before such a question and be formed or answered. **Why** and **How** questions are the most difficult as they are bases on a child's knowledge of what causes certain events to happen, they also require the student to think abstractly, relate the question to previous experiences, and problem solve.

Children get information by asking questions. Questions are the most common way to request information. Questions enable us to learn about new things and ideas, satisfy our curiosity, and test how the world works. Children developing normally ask questions all the time. They have an endless curiosity. They are very bold about asking for new information.

Children who have a language disorders generally do not ask many questions during everyday life. Or, if they do, the type of questions they ask is often limited. Many students with language disorders have trouble understanding questions and responding to them. Some of these students may confuse *wh-* questions types and give a *what* response to a *why* question, or give a *how* response to a *when* question. Even if these students understand the type of response needed, they may lack the vocabulary, experience, or thinking skills to formulate an appropriate response.

When should you ask your child questions? ANY TIME! Ask your child questions during everyday situations including: getting dressed, mealtime, riding in the car, going shopping, playtime, watching TV, bath time, reading a story, bedtime,

The overall goal is to increase a student's expressive language skills in the area of asking and answering questions. As this skill increases, you should notice an improvement in the students' social peer interactions as well as their performance in the classroom. Children learn the meanings of questions gradually. As your child gets older and develops language and thinking skills, the child will understand more difficult questions. Developing the ability to ask questions is an ongoing process and not completed until adolescence.

You can help your child to ask questions. As a parent, you play an important role in your child's language development. By asking the right kinds of questions, you can encourage language "interaction". "Interaction" is the "give" and "take" of information and ideas. In addition to stimulating language development, good questions asking can improve your child's thinking skills. Good questioning will require your child to organize information and solve problems.

1. Give your child interesting things to do and toys to play with. They will stimulate the child to learn more about the world.
2. Do everyday activities with your child. Talk about what you are doing as you do it. Ask and answer questions your child might be thinking. "What will we do next? Add the chocolate chips!" Even if you are not a mind reader, you'll show your child how people think and how people ask questions.
3. Give your full attention when your child is trying to ask you a question. Get down to your child's eye level. After your child gets your attention, allow enough time for the question to be asked. Be patient if your child has difficulty putting thoughts into words.
4. Answer your child's questions. When you give information in response to a question, your child has been successful. Answers actually encourage more questions and stimulate your child's curiosity.
5. Praise your child for asking questions. If you didn't understand the question, ask your child to repeat or show you. If you do understand let your child know. Repeat your child's questions in a simple, correct way. Then answer it.
6. Ask questions often to get information. This provides a model or example for you child to imitate.

Children's ability to answer questions develops in approximately the same order as their ability to ask them. Take note of what types of questions your child can successfully answer. In order to reduce frustration and help your child be a good communicator, try to ask questions that you know your child can answer.

As children learn to talk they usually acquire questioning skills in the following order: (Remember, a child who has a language disorder may have problems understanding the questions listed for a given age. So, parents will have to adjust their level of questions accordingly).

1-2 years Understands What's this?
Simple Yes/No

2-3 years Understands What.... Doing?
Simple Who?
Simple Where?
Simple Why?
What (function)? What do you hear with?

3-4 years Understands How?
Simple What.... if?
How many? How much?
Which?

4-5 years Understands When?
How often/far/long?

5-6 years Understands most questions. Will have trouble with complex questions, such as "Did you tell me how high the water was?"

Sources: No-Glamour Language & Reasoning

Asking Questions by Diann Grimm Parent Articles 1

Help your child learn to ask and answer questions by M. Ann Marquis Parent Articles 1