



QUESTIONING AND CHALLENGE



What is it?

Supporting children's learning through questioning to challenge their thinking.

Open questions are invitations to think and explore ideas and issues through, for example, reasoning, imagining, inventing, hypothesising, predicting, comparing and evaluating.

They are useful for challenging children to think things through for themselves and act as a springboard for extending and developing their emerging language.

Remember 'open ended' questions cannot be answered with one word answers such as yes or no. Open ended questions often beginning with 'what', 'who', 'how' or 'why'.

What to consider



- ❖ Make sure they are appropriate for the age and level of the children you're teaching.
 - ❖ Vary the types of questions you ask different individual children according to their ability and confidence.
 - ❖ Sequence questions you ask from easier to more challenging in order to give children an opportunity to rehearse using the language and lead them to develop increasingly higher order thinking skills.
 - ❖ As well as our skill in asking questions, skill in the way we deal with responses is equally important.
-
- ❖ Remember to pause to give thinking time for children to answer before you leap in and either repeat, rephrase or redirect the question – or, as sometimes happens, answer it yourself!
 - ❖ Be aware of the range of strategies you can use to respond to children's answers e.g. accepting, praising, withholding or giving instant feedback, extending, inviting alternatives, questioning, modifying, probing, correcting or prompting self-correction.
 - ❖ As part of your questioning techniques, it is also important to create a culture where children are encouraged to regularly ask their own questions both to each other and to you. You can do this by explicitly inviting questions about what children are learning.

Examples to encourage creative thinking, action and language could include variations of the following:

What do you notice about ...?

What if ...?

What do you think happens next?

How could you find out...?..?

What have you enjoyed today / learnt?

How did you...?

What do you think would happen if ...?

How do you think...?

What do you think will happen if you do this...?

How do you know...?

What happened when you...?

How are they different...?

Will you tell me about what your doing...?

Is there another way to...?

What designs can you make using these shapes...?

What would you do...?

Can you do it differently...?

How are these alike...?

Tell me about...?

What do you think comes next?

Can you do it another way...?

What else could you use to make the...?

In responding skilfully to support learning, whatever the context, knowing about a range of appropriate strategies helps practitioners to make decisions about which strategies are likely to be effective for groups and individual children.

These strategies include:

Direct instruction: Sometimes it is not appropriate to allow children to explore and discover when an adult can see that direct teaching is the most appropriate strategy. This can include teaching a skill or giving facts/information – or possibly correcting a child’s misconception, although often encouraging children to think through and explore their misconceptions can provide rich opportunities for learning.

Providing assistance: Children learn to choose and direct their own activities, but many will need assistance to develop their skills and confidence to express their own ideas, and share these with their peers.

Guided interaction: Adult and child collaborate on a task, where the adult’s strategies are highly tuned into the child’s existing skills and motivations. The adult uses a range of pedagogical strategies that are responsive to the child’s intentions, focused on the spontaneous learning, and provide opportunities for the child’s feedback. Talking together is a primary tool, using open questions and exploring what the child is thinking about to help the child to go beyond what they understood before.

Participating in the play: Joining in with children’s play, taking cues from the children to understand the nature and purposes of the play, can offer an opportunity to extend children’s learning. Children learn from others in play – often they learn from their peers, and they also learn from a knowledgeable, skilled and sensitive adult who plays with them.