

Understands wh-questions (who, where, what questions)

Understanding and using 'wh' questions helps children take part in conversations, share their knowledge and understanding, and learn about the world around them. Children typically develop 'wh' questions in a sequence, with some being easier to understand than others. Questions such as 'what' and 'where', which are more concrete and linked to things children can see and experience, are usually acquired first. More abstract questions, such as 'who', 'when', and 'why', often develop later and may require additional support and practice.

Practitioners can support children by:

- Gaining the child's attention before asking a question.
- Giving the child time to process and respond.
- Repeating the question using the same wording if needed.
- Providing verbal prompts, such as the first few words of the answer.
- Using Makaton signs to support understanding.
- Teaching one question word at a time.
- Keeping questions in the 'here and now' initially.

What Questions

- Start with objects, toys, foods, and drinks that the child is familiar with and interested in. Hold up an object or show a picture and ask, "What's this?" If the child does not respond, model the answer for them. When the child answers correctly, reinforce their response by saying, "Yes, it's a _____."
- Once the child can answer confidently, gradually introduce a wider range of objects and pictures. You can then move on to questions about actions, for example, "What is Jo doing?" Use photographs of people carrying out everyday actions such as eating, drinking, brushing hair, washing hands, or jumping. If the child does not respond, model the answer and encourage them to repeat it.

Where Questions

- Start with simple 'where' questions about the child's own body, for example, "Where are your eyes?" or "Where is your nose?" If needed, provide physical prompts or model the response.
- You can also use familiar objects. Place two objects in front of the child and ask, "Where is the car?" or "Where is the teddy?" Encourage the child to point to or name the correct object.
- As the child's understanding develops, introduce questions about people and locations. For example, "Where is Jo?" Give the child a choice of two locations, such as "Is she in the garden or the bathroom?" After the child responds, call for the person together and encourage them to answer, "I'm in the garden!"
- Use everyday routines to model and practise 'where' questions throughout the day

Who Questions

- Start by teaching 'who' questions using familiar people in the child's everyday life. For example, when a parent or carer arrives, point to them and ask, "Who is this?" If needed, model the answer for the child.
- Use opportunities throughout the day to ask questions about people involved in activities taking place in front of the child, such as "Who is painting?" or "Who is reading the story?" If the child finds this difficult, provide a choice of two people to support their understanding.
- As the child's confidence develops, ask questions about familiar people and recent events, encouraging them to recall and name the correct person.