

Open-Ended Questions

Using open-ended questions is a wonderful way to stretch children's curiosity, reasoning ability, creativity and independence. Asking open-ended questions gives teachers an opportunity to see what a child is thinking and feeling. A question like, "What color is that block?" evokes a one word answer. An open-ended question such as, "Tell me about the blocks you are using," encourages children to use their language to describe the blocks or what they are doing. There is no right or wrong answer to an open-ended question so all children can be successful in answering them. Teachers can use the questions below to incorporate open-ended questions in their classroom instruction.

Open-Ended Questions

- Can you describe what happened?
- Can you think of a new way to do it?
- Can you help me think this through?
- Do you have any other ideas?
- How are they alike, different?
- How could we make it work?
- How could we work together to solve this?
- How did that happen?
- How did you feel when you finished it?
- How did you get that to work?
- How did you know that?
- How did you work it out?
- How do you explain it?
- How might you do it differently?
- Tell me about how you worked together.
- Tell me about it.
- Tell me about the character (books).
- Tell me about what you built, made, created.
- Tell me about what you saw.
- What can we do to get it to work?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What did you see happening?
- What do you like best about it?
- What do you notice about _____?
- What do you think caused it to change?
- What do you think would happen if you _____?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What happened at the beginning, middle or end of the story (books)?
- What did you learn?
- What makes it work?
- What did you notice happening?
- What problems did you have?
- What was easy?
- What was hard for you to do?
- What would you do different next time?
- How do you know that is the right answer?
- Why do you think _____?
- Why did you choose _____ over _____?

Extend children's thinking by:

Asking questions that encourage language development (verbal, written, and receptive).

Paraphrasing—Repeat what the child said and then add extra information to keep the child thinking.

Using advanced vocabulary— Use new words when repeating and extending what children say. For example: science words (*predict, observe, investigate*), texture words (*sticky, rough, silky*), measurement words (*gigantic, tiny, humongous,*) etc.

Remember:

- If you can answer "yes" or "no" the question is not open-ended.
- Open-ended questions require more "think" time so be patient as you wait for children to respond.