

Understanding Different Types of Questions

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There are several different types of questions. Each type asks for different abilities of responses. Bloom’s Taxonomy, a hierarchical order of skills and/or needs begins at the bottom and moves upwards (for example “Basic Needs” like shelter and food are at the bottom of what children need to thrive). Bloom’s Taxonomy regarding types of questions also begins with the basic. With each level, children will need to use more language and critical thinking skills. As teachers, we start with basic. As children show they are past this type of questioning, we move up- **we scaffold** as we go so children can begin to express themselves more completely. We do this so the children will have appropriate opportunities to practice thinking, responding and engaging in conversations needed to be successful in both academic and social situations. As in all Bloom’s Taxonomy hierarchies, **the lower levels form the foundations for the higher levels.**

1. **Remember questions.** These require a child to identify, name, count, repeat and recall. Often this is where we get stuck. As children respond to these types of questions, we know they are listening and have gained specific knowledge. Children need to be able to tell us what they know, but this is rote, and most basic way to gain that information. **Examples:** “What’s your name?”, “How old are you?”, “What shape is this?”
2. **Understand questions.** This allows children to describe, discuss, explain and summarize. Clearly, this type of question provides opportunity for a child to use more language and thinking skills. It also practically guarantees a “give-and-take” will occur. **Examples:** “How did you build your tower?”, “Can you tell me about your family?”, “What do you see happening in the picture?”
3. **Apply questions.** These types of questions allow children to explain why, dramatize, identify with/relate to. These types of questions occur in natural conversations all the time. Through give-and-take, people naturally ask these types of questions. Children get to talk about why they did something, how it feels to them and why something matters. **Examples:** “Why did you put the cylinder on that side but not on the other side?”, “How does the story make you feel?”, “If you were the cook, tell me how you would make our rice and beans?”
4. **Analyze questions.** These types of questions allow a child to recognize change, experiment, infer, compare and contrast. These are clearly high level brain functions that combine language and critical thinking skills. **Examples:** “I wonder how our school rice and beans compares to the rice and beans your mommy makes?”, “How does your new house compare to your old house?”

5. **Evaluate questions.** These high level types of questions give a child a way to express opinion, judge, defend and criticize. **Examples:** “You liked the red delicious apple so why don’t you like the gala apple?”, “What made you stand up for Joey on the playground today?”
6. **Create questions.** These help children use more than language and critical thinking skills. It may involve other skills like writing, building and experimenting. These questions get at making, constructing, design and authorship. **Example:** “Let’s write a letter and ask your mommy how she makes her rice and beans.”, “Make a special menu for the House Area.”

It is still important to understand when to ask a question. Many times an observational comment or respectful silence is most appropriate. Practicing **SOUL** (Silent, Observe, Understand, Listen) can make it clear the type of interaction is best given the child, situation, time of day and activity.