



SEND Support Services: Verbal Reasoning



Age Range: 4 - 7 years

Who can use this:

Parents/Teachers/TAs

When to seek extra support:

- If you feel that your child is not making progress.
- If your child is older, but still struggles with some types of questions.

Who needs this?

Children who:

- struggle to answer questions
- give an answer that is only loosely connected to the question

- struggle to suggest what another person might be feeling or thinking
- find it difficult to tell you about something in the correct sequence
- are unable to suggest how to solve a problem, or make a prediction about something.

What can you do?

Working with children/young people with poor verbal reasoning skills can be challenging, here are some things you can do:

- Simplify your language if needed, instead of saying 'tell me what happened' you could be more specific - who was there? What did they do? What did you do?
- Talk through your own thought processes - this helps your child to learn how to approach a question or problem.
- Use everyday situations - we've used all the milk - what could we do? Your sister is upset, what do you think made her cry?
- Remember that when your child is upset or angry, this will affect their ability to think, so they may not be able to answer questions which they usually answer easily. If this happens, think of an easier question to get the same information.

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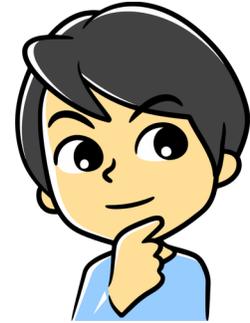
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Questions

Some questions are more difficult for children to answer than others - when you're looking at a book together, the question 'Where's Spot?' is easier for your child to answer than 'What would Spot do if he got lost?'

Like a lot of other skills, children learn how to answer questions in a developmental order. They learn how to answer the easiest questions first, then move on to more abstract questions which ask them to think about the wider picture, perhaps drawing on their knowledge of the world and their own experiences.



We often talk about different 'levels' of questions, which helps us to establish the point a child has reached in their development of verbal reasoning. Your speech and language therapist may have told you which level your child is currently working at, if this has been identified as a problem area. If not, try some of these questions at different levels.

Levels of questions:

Level 1 - These questions are the easiest to answer. ***The answer or information will always be in front of your child, all he or she has to do is show you.*** These questions could include:

- Where's the dog?
- Show me the teddy
- What's this?
- Find me one like this



Level 2 - These are a bit more difficult - ***your child still has the answer in front of them, but they need to think a bit more precisely.*** They might need to focus on a specific aspect of the question, or think about the function of an object or the category it belongs to. These questions could include:

- Show me the **red** ball
- Find something else that rolls
- Show me something spiky



60% of 3 year olds understand level 1 and 2 questions.

Level 3 - These questions are much more difficult to answer. ***Your child has to combine information with some of their own ideas to find the answer.*** These questions could include:

- What might happen next?
- How does a character feel?
- Find me something else you can read that is not a book.
- What could a character say?
- Can you put these pictures in the right order to tell the story?
- Can you tell me how to get ready for bed? (correct sequence).

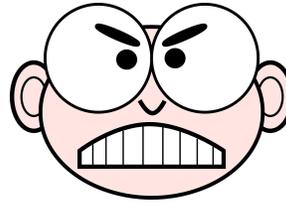


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Level 4 - These questions ask your child to justify their answer. All 'why?' questions are level 4. Other questions could include:

- How can we fix this problem?
- Why can't we go out today?
- Why is your sister happy?
- What could we do if....
- How do we know that the character in the story is angry?



65% of five year olds understand questions at levels 3 and 4.

Activities to try:

Any of the following activities provide opportunities to develop your child's verbal reasoning skills. Use the information about different levels to decide which questions will be at the right level for your child. It's always best to start with some that he or she can answer easily, before introducing some more challenging ones.

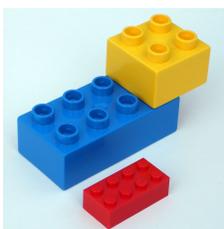
Looking at books together: sharing books is a great way to develop verbal reasoning skills, whatever level your child is at. If he/she needs more practice at level 3, for example, ask your child what might happen next, or ask them to suggest how a character is feeling or what they might say. To develop their skills at level 4, ask them to justify their answers.



Cooking together: following a set of instructions, such as 'pour in the milk and then add the eggs' can develop skills at level 3. Asking your child 'what do we need to get out of the fridge to make a pizza?' is more difficult, developing these skills at level 4.



Playing with toys: using toys which your child enjoys playing with will help them to stay motivated and interested. Have a selection of similar things, varying in colour or size to practice level 2 questions, for example. If your child likes Duplo, ask them to find a green brick, or a bigger/smaller brick.



If your child needs help to answer level 3 questions, you could ask them to find something with wheels that is not a car when playing with a range of toy vehicles.



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Playing outside: Outdoor play provides lots of examples to practise verbal reasoning skills:

- Find a leaf (level 1)
- Find a yellow flower (level 2)
- Give a set of directions, such as 'run to the tree then back to the door' (level 3)
- How can we tell that your brother is happy? (level 4)

Think about how you could use the questions for other activities and adapt them to fit whatever you are doing!



Don't worry too much about getting the questions exactly right - the important thing is to remember that some questions are more difficult to answer than others. This might explain why your child finds it difficult to answer you - they're not being deliberately awkward, they might just need you to ask the same thing in an easier way!



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