



How to Teach Children Questions to Improve Their Understanding to Ask

"In key stage 2, pupils should maintain positive attitudes to reading and an understanding of what they read by asking questions to improve their understanding."

National curriculum statement

Asking questions is an important tool for children to use when engaging with a text. Children are naturally curious and will usually be comfortable to ask questions to clarify their understanding. Our role as educators is to give them the skills to ask the types of questions that will allow them to monitor their own comprehension when reading.

Key Vocabulary

question, vocabulary, language, understanding, open-ended question, closed question

Common Misconceptions and Errors

Some children may be passive with their reading in that they believe that by reading enough, the meaning of the text will become clear. Challenge children to ask questions as they read, such as 'Why did they do that?' or 'What does the character mean by that?' so that they can gain a deeper understanding.

Bringing English to Life

Encourage children to ask questions by playing games. For example, have a secret item in a box and encourage children to ask questions to determine what it is. Make sure that children use open-ended questions rather than trying to guess what it is.

Example Questions to Develop Understanding

- What questions do you have before/during/after we have read the text?
- What does this word mean?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Why did the author use this word?
- How will the character progress? Why do you think that?

Teaching and Learning Points:

- Model how to ask questions. This could be before you start the text, as you are reading it

aloud or after you have finished reading.

- Give children lots of modelled examples of different types of questions and link them to the text. For example, 'When I read..., it made me wonder why..?'
- Show questions that clarify meaning, help readers understand characters/events, help us make predictions or understand the author's intent.
- Provide children with question starters to help them generate their own questions during guided reading sessions.
- Questions that begin with 'how' or 'why' cause the reader to think and analyse the text more and often need evidence in order to answer them.
- 'What, where, when and who' questions are helpful to clarify understanding.
- Use texts that offer lots of opportunity for questioning.
- Fill your learning environment with examples of questions. Use posters, working walls or bookmarks to give children lots of opportunities to see different question types.
- Children should read outside of school, so it is important to involve parents/carers with the question asking process.



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