

What Types of Questions Do Children Understand When?

Children's ability to understand different types of questions develops as their language skills grow. That's why it's important to think carefully about the kinds of questions we ask. Most of the questions - four out of five - should match the child's current level of understanding. Just one in five should be from the next level up to gently build on their learning. Keep in mind that if a child is upset or tired, they may find it harder to understand questions than they usually would.

Tip: Use mostly questions the child can understand, with occasional ones that challenge them.

Asking the right types of questions helps children build confidence and language skills. Use everyday moments and props to support their understanding.

Levels of Questioning

Level 1 (Age two to three years) • Point to ... • Pick up the ... • Find one like this • Show me a ... • What's this? • What's that noise? • What did you see/hear/touch?	Level 2 (Age three to four years) • I put my hat on my... • What does it do? • What is it for? • Where ...? • Who ...? • What is happening in the picture? • What goes with the spade? • What else is a fruit?
Level 3 (Age four to five years) • What have you done? • What might happen next? • What did you do today? • What might Jamie say? • When ...? • How do you feel when ...? • How might Johnny feel? • How are these the same? • Show me an animal that is not big.	Level 4 (Age five plus years) • What made the baby cry? • What made ... happen? • What will happen if ...? • What should you do if...? • What could Hannah do if...? • What do we need to make a ...? • How do you know? • How can we tell ...? • Why ...?

These age ranges are intended as general guidance – every child develops at their own pace and in their own way.