



Open Ended Questions

Prepared by the Early Childhood Consultants at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

It is important that caregivers use effective questioning techniques when speaking with children. Asking numerous questions or “quizzing” is not always a useful technique. Instead, ask questions that require more thought on the child’s part.

Give the child time to process the question and listen to the child’s answer. Being listened to will strengthen a child’s desire to participate. Also, by listening to the child’s answers, we learn more about that child and can encourage dialogue.

Ask less closed-ended questions

Sometimes called single-answer questions, these demand few decision-making skills and are most often answered with yes or no.

Ask more open-ended questions

Ask questions to stimulate and create a thinking atmosphere. Here are some question prompts: What are...?, Tell me about..., What would happen if ...?

Here are a few examples of open-ended questions:

- Tell me about your painting.
- Tell me about your family.
- How did you build this?
- How do you think you could reach that truck that rolled really far under the shelf?
- How does that make you feel?
- What would you like to do next?
- What did you do on the playground?
- Why do you think that will work?
- What supplies will you need?
- What do you think would happen if you dropped this ball into the water?
- What do you think will happen at the end of this story?

Why ask open-ended questions?

Using open-ended questions encourages cognitive (intellectual) development. It helps children learn higher level skills, such as problem solving. Open-ended questions help children practice their language skills, develop a stronger vocabulary, and engage in communication skills that promote social development.

Open-ended questions also encourage children to express their opinions and allow them to tell you about things that are important to them. Helping children talk about what they feel and what matters to them is a way you can be supportive of them in their social and emotional development. Open-ended questions can help you evaluate children and their learning. If you listen, you will find out what they know, what they do not know, what they want to know, and much more.

Resources :

Child Care Resource and Referral of Western Kentucky University, What Do You Think About Open-Ended Questions? by Dr. Connie Jo Smith Revised 5/14

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