



Language for Thinking

In school, we use an approach called Language for Thinking to support a number of children. It is a structured way of asking questions about pictures that supports children to develop and extend their thinking, moving from the 'here and now' to the 'how and why'. It is useful to help children develop their skills to answer questions and use evidence to explain their ideas. This approach starts with pictures but can be extended to using written texts. In the Language for Thinking approach we work to use

- Simple grammatical sentences
- Familiar scenarios
- Focus on using people's names, rather than he or she

Language for Thinking uses questions at three levels

Note: Do not attempt to use all the questions in any one session. The questions at the different levels build on each other.

<p>Level A: This focuses on language in the 'here and now' looking at a picture and thinking about what the child can see in it. It uses some more abstract questions that relate directly to the child's own experiences.</p>	<p>Level B: At this level we ask the child to link what is shown in the picture and their wider world knowledge, putting their thoughts into a logical sequence and beginning to make simple inferences (reading between the lines).</p>	<p>Level C: These are the more abstract questions focusing on the use of 'why' to ask children to reflect on their thinking and link ideas, asking children to think about a range of different possible outcomes and ideas.</p>
<p><u>Possible questions starters:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening? • Can you find a... • What is X doing? • What did X get? • What are Xs for? • What do you do with it? 	<p><u>Possible question starters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could they say? • What is going to happen next? • What is it made of? • What is in...? • What is an X? What does X mean? 	<p><u>Possible question starters</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else might happen? • What if? • Why? • X should happen, why? • Why is it made of that? • Why not?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who? • Where? • Has this happened to you? How did you feel? What did you say? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why? (referring to something clear and obvious) • When? • How did they feel? • Find something you can X but is not a Y e.g. something you can eat but is not an apple. (when the apple is in the picture) • Tell me an X that is not a Y. e.g. tell me a fruit that is not an apple (when the apple is in the picture). • Tell me about this picture in one sentence • Tell me about this picture using the word X. • Tell me how you... (referring to something in the picture) • How will...? • What is the problem? (referring to something in the picture) • If X does Y what might happen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why shouldn't...? • Why are they X not Y? e.g. happy, not sad • Why is X better than Y? e.g. Why is going home better than going to the park? • How do you know? • How could they...? • Tell me the difference between X and Y? • What is the same about X and Y? • Tell me three things that X and Y have
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How to use this approach at home

1. Start with a picture of something familiar to your child. This could be a photo of their family or friends, a picture from a book or magazine showing a familiar scene, event or setting or a still from a familiar TV programme (pause the programme and use the picture on the screen).
2. Discuss with your child the key information about what is in the picture (see example below).
3. Tell your child a 'story' about what is happening in the picture, using names, and highlighting the key information and relevant vocabulary (see example below).
4. Start discussing the picture using questions from Level A, if your child is happy with these questions move onto Level B and C questions. Don't worry about these being perfect. They are intended to act as a prompt and a support.
 - Do not attempt to use all the questions in any level in one session. Each session should last less than 10 minutes.
 - Always start with some level A questions, but as your child becomes more confident you may want to focus on the higher level questions. The right level of questions will depend on your child and their ability, enthusiasm, and interest.

Example



- Possible discussion starters: Have you ever had an argument about which TV programme to watch? Remember when you and (name of sibling) had a fight over which TV programme to watch? What happened? How did you sort out the problem?
- Tell the story: Katie and Nathan wanted to watch TV. Nathan wanted to watch cartoons. Katie wanted to watch a programme about animals. Katie was holding the remote control. Nathan grabbed the remote control. Katie held onto it.
- Discuss the picture using the questions based on the 3 levels.

Possible Level A questions	Possible Level B questions	Possible Level C questions
Who is in the story?	How do Nathan and Katie feel?	How do you know that Katie and Nathan feel X? (This would extend the answer to the Level B question)
What is happening?	What might happen next?	What else might happen?
What programme did Nathan want to watch?	What is the problem?	Why shouldn't Nathan and Katie fight over the remote control?

What did Katie want to watch?	Why didn't Katie let go of the remote control?	What could Katie and Nathan do so they don't need to fight?
What did Nathan do?	Why did Nathan grab the remote control?	If Mum found Katie and Nathan fighting, she might ask them to take turns. Why?
What do you do with a TV remote control?	What is a remote control?	What is the same about a TV remote control and a game console?

Strategies to support your child

- Praise your child's efforts and try and give specific feedback e.g. "That's right. I would be surprised if someone bumped into me."
- Keep the sessions short.
- Focus on the question level that your child can answer most easily so that they experience success. Ask only one or two questions from the next level.
- If you need to repeat the question, do so in the same way emphasising the key words, rather than rephrasing it.
- Focus your child's attention on the relevant part of the picture "Look at this part of the picture. It will help you."
- Try using the word 'because' to prompt their answers.
- Try to focus your child on what is relevant, "You said a lot there, just tell me about..."
- Relate it to your child's own experience, "Has this happened to you?"
- Ask your child to explain the picture to a toy or pet to encourage them to give fuller answers and explanations.
- Prompt your child to say more by saying "What else..."
- Model the correct grammar by repeating back what your child said using the correct grammar.