

Working on 'Wh' Questions



Answering questions is not easy for children with speech and language delays. The child must:

- Understand what is being asked
- Think of an answer
- Say the answer

You can help your child get better at answering questions by practicing at home.

We ask concrete and abstract questions. Concrete questions are about the here and now, while abstract questions are about things you can't see right now. Concrete questions are easier to answer.

Example of concrete question: Where's your nose?

Example of abstract question: Where does a fish live?

Types of Questions

Some questions are easier to answer than others. Start with easier questions. Once your child can answer these, you can try harder questions.

Here are the questions from easiest to most difficult:

- 1 What
- 2 Where
- 3 Who
- 4 What do you do with
- 5 Why
- 6 How
- 7 When

Every Question Word Means Something Different

Before you ask the question, tell your child what the question word means so they understand what you are asking.

What → is a thing or action

Example: What did you eat for breakfast? What is she doing?

Where → is a place

Example: Where did you eat breakfast?

Who → is a person

Example: Who made you breakfast?

What do you do with → is the way we use an object

Example: What do you do with a spoon?

Why → is the reason we do something

Example: Why do we eat breakfast?

How → is the way something is done

Example: How do you make pancakes?

When → is a time

Example: When do we eat breakfast?

Only work on one type of question at a time!

Tips for Practicing at Home



'Wh' Questions & Books

Books are a great way to work on 'Wh' questions and can be a special time for you and your child to spend together.

Choose a book with lots of pictures.

You can ask questions before, during, and after the story.

Read the same books over and over. Your child will get better at answering questions with practice.

Make comments about the story too, don't just ask questions!

The local library is a great place to borrow books.

If your child needs help...

- **Wait 5-10 seconds** for them to think about what they want to say
- Say the question **again** or ask it a **different way** (e.g., What's your favorite food → What do you like to eat?)
- Give your child **2 choices** (e.g., Do you like *pizza* or *spaghetti*?)
- Point to a **picture/object** or **act out** the question (e.g., pretending to eat)
- **Start the answer** for your child and let them fill in the rest
 - Adult: What did we eat for lunch?
 - Child: [no response]
 - Adult: We ate sss...
 - Child: Soup!
- **Add more information** to what your child said. This helps them use correct grammar and give a longer answer.
 - Adult: What's your favorite food?
 - Child: Yogurt.
 - Adult: Yes, you eat yogurt everyday for breakfast.

Do not...

- **Do not ask too many questions.** This puts pressure on your child and makes them feel like they're being tested. Remember to make comments too.
- **Do not say 'no' or 'that's wrong'.** Instead, tell your child the right answer.
 - Adult: What is the car doing?
 - Child: Car.
 - Adult: The car is *driving*.

Things to Remember

- 1 **Meet your child where they are.** Avoid asking questions that are too easy or too difficult. Work on questions that your child can answer with a little bit of help from you.
- 2 **Go step by step.** Once your child can answer without help, they are ready to move onto the next question level (e.g., once your child can answer 'Where' questions on their own, try working on 'Who' questions).
- 3 **The goal is to learn and have fun.** Give your child clues to help them answer the question but give them a chance to try on their own first. Keep practice times short and fun.
- 4 **Be your child's cheerleader.** Praise your child for trying, even if they don't get the answer right (e.g., you can say 'Good try', 'Hmm that was a tricky one', or 'Almost!').

