

Supporting Young English Learners Through Asking and Answering Questions About an Experience

Regional Educational Laboratories
West, Northwest,
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

Families and caregivers, you play an important role in your child's language learning. Children can strengthen their language every day by asking and answering questions about an experience. In this activity you will ask your child to talk about an experience they've had.

Keep in mind:

- You and your child can use your home language or English, whichever is strongest for you.
- Asking and answering questions in your home language will also help your child with English.
- Enjoy this time with your child. Learning together is fun!

Why ask and answer questions about an experience?

Asking and answering questions about an experience allows children to strengthen their language.

Let's get started!

Follow the steps below. *See the back for experience ideas and additional language supports.*



- ▶ **Step 1: Share, read** about, or create an experience with your child inside or outside of the home. Example: *Prepare a meal or take a walk around your neighborhood together.*



- ▶ **Step 2: Ask questions** about the experience before, during, or at the end.
- Help your child “stretch their language.” If your child answers your question with one word, ask them to add more to their answer. You can model this for them.
 - Ask surface- and deeper-level questions. Surface-level questions help your child recall what they did and saw. Example: *What are three things we saw at the park?* Deeper-level questions help your child think more about the experience and put ideas together. Example: *Is going to the park better than playing video games? Why?*



- ▶ **Step 3: Encourage** your child to **draw or write** about the experience.

Learning Goal: Children will strengthen their oral language skills

Grades: Kindergarten–3rd grade

Materials: Identify or create an experience that you would like to share with your child; paper and crayons, pencils, or markers

Family and Caregiver Activity: Supporting Young English Learners Through Asking and Answering Questions About an Experience

Types of Experiences Inside of the Home to Talk About With Your Child

- Preparing, cooking, or eating a meal
- Playing a game
- Organizing a room (a kitchen, bathroom, or bedroom), a shelf or a drawer



Types of Experiences Outside of the Home to Talk About With Your Child

- Taking a walk around your neighborhood
- Playing in a safe location
- Observing something outdoors (animals, bugs, puddles, trees, clouds, etc.)



Additional Language Supports

Your child can stretch or develop their language when asking and answering questions about an experience. Consider using the questions and responses below as you discuss an experience with your child.

Surface-Level Questions to Ask About an Experience	Possible Responses
What did you notice?	I noticed ____.
What do you wonder about ____?	I wonder about ____ and ____.
What is something new you learned today?	One thing I learned was ____.

Deeper-Level Questions to Ask About an Experience	Possible Responses
Tell me more about why ____ happened.	____ happened because ____.
Tell me how you came up with that answer.	I think/know ____ because ____.
Tell me how you know ____.	I know ____ because ____.
Tell me why you think/feel ____.	In my opinion, ____ because ____.

Language Challenge:

Children can strengthen their language every day by asking and answering questions about an experience. Now that your child has **answered questions**, encourage them to **ask questions** for you to answer about an experience. Children can create their own questions to ask you or they can use some of the questions in the table above. Asking questions allows children to stretch their language on a daily basis.