

How to Use the Blanks Questions Framework

As part of daily communication with children we ask lots of questions.

It is important to pitch questions to a level that children can understand. This ensures that the activity is not too hard and that the child can participate in the conversation.

Consider what Blanks level the child is at before asking them a question. The SLT may have outlined what Blanks level a child is at in their SLT report or target sheet.

If not, ask the individual a few questions from each blanks level and see which they find easy to answer and which they find harder. If you have to infer or guess what they might be trying to say, focus your questions at the easier levels only.

The 4 stages of Blank's questions are:

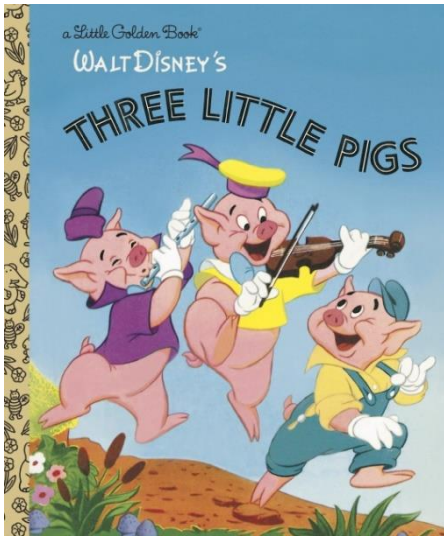
- **Level 1** - questions related to what the student can see in front of them and hear at the time, or to objects or pictures that have just been removed.
- **Level 2** - questions still related to what the student can see or hear, or objects/pictures just removed but more detail is expected in the answer.
- **Level 3** - more complex questions involving careful listening to the question and thinking about what information the question has asked them to provide.
- **Level 4** - the student is expected to think about what may have happened, what could happen or what would happen in a given situation. Involves problem solving to come up with an answer.

When Should I Use Blanks Questions

You can use blanks questions throughout the day.

See some ideas below of different activities and types of questions you may ask depending on which blanks level the child is able to understand.

During reading or literacy



Blanks level	Example Questions
1	Find one like this Show me the pig
2	What happened first? Who is the tallest? What size is it? How many pigs are there? How are the houses different?
3	What will happen next What might the Pig say? What is a Chimney? How are the pigs the same?
4	What could he have used to build the house instead? What could the wolf do if his car broke down on the way? What could the pig have done to warn his friend?

Blanks level	Example Questions
1	Show me where it hurts? Point to who you were playing with?
2	What happened? Who were you playing with? Where are you hurt?
3	What happened next? Tell me what happened in order.
4	What can we do now to fix the argument? Your knee is bleeding, what can we do to fix it? What could you do next time?

During an incident in the playground



Blanks level	Example Questions
1	Show me the goggles?
2	What happened? Find me the shiny one?
3	What will happen next? Tell me the steps from the beginning What is a microscope?
4	What will happen if you add more? What could you have done to make it easier next time?

During a science experiment



HOW TO HELP

The child may find it difficult to answer a question. Instead of telling them the answer, you could....

- **Repeat the question again, emphasize key words**
They may need another opportunity to listen and think about the question
- **Rephrase the question**
Use more familiar vocabulary
Can you say the same question in fewer or using simpler words?
Example; Instead of asking “what is the function of a knife?” try “what do you do with a knife?”
- **Help the student to relate questions to their own personal experiences**
 - Encourage children to apply the situation to their own experience e.g. a question linked to crossing the road in a story may be easier if they think about when they cross the road on the way to school.
 - Simplify the question, for example you could change, “Why do you think firefighters wear such big heavy coats?” to “What does it feel like when you stand close to a fire? So that it relates to their personal experience.
- **Start the answer and pause for them to fill in the gaps**
Prompt the child with the beginning of the answer, so they only have to supply the last word or end of the sentence.
Example:
Q: What could you do if your dog has muddy feet?
A: (No response)
Q: You could find an old towel and.....
- **Use a sound prompt**
Prompt the child’s response by providing the first sound (s) of the answer.
Example:
Q: Why can’t the dog go inside with muddy paws?
A: (No response)
Q: Because he’ll make everything d.....
- **Give a forced choice**
Prompt children by giving them an option of answers.
One option is incorrect and the other is the correct answer.
This way the student has heard the language they need to answer the question themselves.
Example:
Q: Why can’t the dog go inside with muddy paws?
A: Don’t know.
Q: Because he will make the floor dirty or because mud is brown?

Examples of questions from each Blanks level

Level I questions

Language Skill	Question Example
Looking for a matching object	Find me one like this
Identifying an object by sound	Show me what you heard
Identifying objects by something that can be seen/heard/smelt	What did you hear/touch/smell?
Remembering pictured objects	What did you see?
Remembering information	What did you see?
Copying a simple sentence	Say this: ...

Level II questions

Language Skill	Question Example
Finding for an object by its function	Find one that can...
Describing a scene	What is happening?
Remembering information	Who? What? Where?
Naming characteristics and functions of objects	Tell me its...
Finding items that have two characteristics	Find one that is...an...
Identifying differences	How are these different
Completing a sentence	The mouse was...

Level III questions

Language Skill	Question Example
Following a verbal and visual instruction	Fine one to use with this
Making a simple prediction	What will happen next?
Taking on the role of another character	What could he say?
Following a set of directions	Do ... then ...
Explaining a set of directions	Tell me how...
Arranging a set of pictures in a sequence	Put these in order (first, next, last)
Making a generalization about events	What happened to all of these?
Make a simple story from a set of pictures	Tell this story
Identifying similarities	How are these the same?
Identifying an object by exclusion	What else?
Selecting a set of objects by exclusion	Find the things that are not...
Giving an example by excluding a specific object	Name something that can...but is not a...
Giving an example by excluding a group of objects	Name something that is not a... (e.g. animal, furniture, food etc.)
Defining words	What is a...?

Level IV questions

Language Skill	Question Example
Predicting	Where will...if...? What will happen if...?
Justifying a prediction	Why will?
Justifying a decision	Why would/wouldn't it...?
Identifying the causes of an event	What made it happen?
Coming up with a solution	What could you do?
Coming up with a solution from another's perspective	What could she do
Selecting what can be used to achieve a goal	What could we use?
Explaining the means to a goal	Why should we use that?
Explaining how objects are made	Why is...made of that?
Explaining an interpretation we have made from an observation	How can we tell...?
Explaining the logic of words	Why is this called a...?
Explaining obstacles to an action	Why can't we...?