

STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S ORAL LANGUAGE AND LITERACY: ASKING QUESTIONS

ORAL LANGUAGE SUPPORTING EARLY LITERACY
RESEARCH PROJECT



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Asking Questions



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Background to the Project

Student's oral language ability has been shown to have a significant influence on the development of their reading, writing and spelling.

Oral language is a component of all teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom.

Strengthening students' oral language will lead to better literacy learning.

In the research project to date, four oral language abilities have been shown to enhance literacy development are as follows:

- Ability of identify sounds and sound patterns in words;
- Ability to use and comprehend longer and more complex sentences;
- Knowledge of words (vocabulary); and,
- Ability to link ideas to say and write a story.

The types of questions we ask influences how well our children comprehend complex sentences and it also impacts on their ability to put longer and more complex sentences together.

Simple questions have simple and direct answers taken straight from what we have heard or read, e.g.

What was the boy's name? What was the car's colour?

Complex questions require more complex answers involving more ideas, e.g.

Why would the boy have been crying? How would you have felt?

Answering complex questions still means children
need to know what they have heard or read

AND AS WELL

they need to think of and add more ideas.

Asking more complex questions helps children develop better oral language and thinking abilities. It improves both their listening comprehension and their reading comprehension

Observation of adults asking children questions about a book they have read suggests that:

- 70% of the questions are simple
- 30% of the questions are complex

One way we can improve our children's listening and reading comprehension is simply to reverse this frequency of questions.

Ask:

- Simple questions 30% of the time
- Complex questions 70% of the time

IDEA

FOR EVERY ONE SIMPLE
QUESTION
YOU ASK YOUR CHILD,
ASK TWO COMPLEX QUESTIONS

Read the story on the next slide

What are some simple questions you could ask?

What is a simple question?

What are some complex questions you could ask?

What is a complex question?

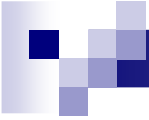
It was a sunny day and Bill and his friend Ned were going on a fishing trip. Bill got his fishing kit and then they both ran all the way to the beach. They got into their boat and went out to sea.

Bill had to sit and hold his rod so that it didn't slip into the sea. He was hoping to catch a lot of fish. Suddenly, Bill felt a nip on his rod and it felt like a big fish! He pulled and pulled but the fish was too big.

As he pulled, the boat started to tip up. His rod slipped and Ned jumped to grab it. The boat started rocking and they both fell overboard! Into the water they both went!

Both Bill and Ned swam to the side of the boat. Ned held one side while Bill climbed in on the other side. Then he helped pull Ned into the boat.

They were very lucky and decided to be more careful from now on. As they were both wet, they went back to the shore and then went home. No fish today.



“Clint, I need to send you to the shop for me,” said Mum. Clint turned off the lamp in his room and went to the kitchen. He saw his mum writing out the list of things he had to get.

“There are only three things so you can carry it all on your bike,” said Mum. Clint had to hunt around to find his helmet. He could only find his sister’s helmet and it was pink with a dint in the side. He put it on and went out to his bike.

He held the list in his hand as he rode over a big bump near the pond. At the shop, he read the list. He had to get milk, the sandwich bread and some butter. After he bought the items, he got back on his bike outside the shop when suddenly he heard a noise.

It was his friend in his dad’s car. “I love your pink helmet,” yelled his friend. Clint rode home as quickly as he could. Next time he went to the shop, he would make sure he wore his own helmet.