

HIGH-QUALITY INTERACTIONS

4 REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

These 4 reflective questions can support practitioners to include the essential elements of high-quality interactions within their practice.



"We will always be doing the right thing if we are aware of each child's development, and are providing interactions and opportunities that match the needs of the child."

- **Realising the Ambition (2020)**



Early Years Training

"The purpose of any interaction is to consolidate, extend, or provoke children's learning and development."

- **Julie Fisher (2016)**

QUESTION 1

WHY ARE HIGH-QUALITY INTERACTIONS IMPORTANT?

High-quality interactions are an important feature of the practitioner role. They can positively support children's development and the relationships that they form.

These interactions can support:

- Building of positive, secure relationships.
- Responsive practice that meets children's needs.
- Inclusivity resulting from practitioners understanding of each child as an individual.
- Practitioner's knowledge of children's interests, which can be used to support learning.
- Development of language and thinking skills.

QUESTION 2

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF A HIGH-QUALITY INTERACTION?

Many different features contribute towards high-quality interactions. It's important to be aware of these when engaging with children, and to understand the impact that these can have on the quality of an experience.

These features include:

- Eye Contact & Open Body Language
- Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication (Facial Expressions/Gestures.)
- Visual Aids (Boardmaker/Photographs.) Consistency in approach is key.
- Modelling language clearly and slowly, extending where appropriate.
- Demonstrating rules of conversation. Provide opportunities for practice.
- Giving children 'thinking time.'
- Use of open-ended/higher-order questions.
- Listening to understand rather than respond.
- Name the learning taking place or skills being used. *"Great problem solving!"*
- Being down at the child's level can effectively support all above features.

QUESTION 3

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH-QUALITY QUESTIONING?

Effective questioning within interactions can help learners consolidate, deepen, and extend their learning and thinking. These encourage children to think hard, not only about the answer, but the learning process.

These characteristics include:

- Asking questions that are relevant to what children want to know.
- Open-ended questions that provide opportunities for many different answers.
- Higher-order questions that promote children's use of 'thinking skills.'
"I wonder what?"
- Planned questions. If there is a current interest, do some research and plan questions.
- 'Sustained Shared Thinking'. Quality interactions can occur when the adult and child think and learn together.
- Giving time to think, rather than 'jumping-in' too quickly. Children require time to process questions. Research suggests this can take up-to 20 seconds.

QUESTION 4

HOW CAN HIGH-QUALITY INTERACTIONS SUPPORT 'NEXT STEPS' IN LEARNING?

Appropriate next steps are vital for extending learning that has already been observed. High-quality interactions can inform practitioners of potential next steps, supporting their ability to respond and plan suitable learning experiences.

Interactions support next steps by:

- Understanding each individual child as a learner. 'Knowing your children.'
- Ensuring 'next steps' are relevant to the child's developmental stage.
- Builds child's confidence to share their own knowledge with adults.
- Promotes 'inter-thinking' and the development of the child's own ideas.
- Active participation where children can be active in their own learning.
- 'Commenting' introduces new words to children's vocabulary. By expanding on the child's key words/phrases, practitioners encourage longer sentences.
- Introducing 'WOW' words can support learning of alternative words with the same meaning.