

# HIGH-QUALITY QUESTIONING

## 4 KEY ASPECTS

This 'Quick Guide' will support practitioners to reflect upon the 4 key aspects of high-quality effective questioning and ways to include these within practice.



*"We use skilled questioning and interact in a sensitive, responsive, and stimulating way to promote curiosity, independence, and confidence. We listen effectively to children, and they know their views are respected and acted upon."*

- HGIOELC (2016:29)



Early Years Training

## ASPECT 1

## ASPECT 2

## ASPECT 3

## ASPECT 4

### OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

### COMMENTING

### HIGHER-ORDER QUESTIONS

### 'WOW' WORDS

Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". They encourage discussion rather than short/single-word answers.

Commenting can be used as a 'softer' approach to support development of children's thinking skills. When 'commenting', there is no pressure for children to respond verbally, only positive opportunities to listen and learn.

These questions invite answers that go beyond simple information, encouraging learners to use abstract language functions, such as speculating, hypothesising, giving and justifying opinions.

These words enrich and expand children's listening and speaking vocabulary through the introduction of new sophisticated words.

'Open-Ended Questions' can support:

'Commenting' enables children to:

'Higher Order Questioning' supports:

There are three tiers of words that can be used with young children:

- Problem-Solving.
- Greater use of language and vocabulary.
- Practitioner learning about individual children.
- 'Sustained Shared Thinking.'
- Building of children's self-confidence.

- Hear good speech and language.
- Learn about the world around them.
- Join-in and communicate with practitioners.

- **Creating** – Generating new ideas, products, or points of view.
- **Evaluating** – Considering and justifying decisions and actions.
- **Analysing** – Breaking information into parts to explore understanding and relationships.
- **Applying** – Using information in other situations.
- **Understanding** – Ability to explain ideas and concepts.
- **Remembering** – Recalling information. (Bloom's Taxonomy)

- **Tier 1:** Everyday Basic Words – "Friend", "Happy", or "Baby."
- **Tier 2:** WOW Words – High frequency words for more mature language users. These can be used regularly to support language development. "Freezing", "Discover", "Marvellous."
- **Tier 3:** Advanced Words – Low frequency words limited to specific contexts and interests. "Xylophone", "Astronaut", "Quadruple."

"Did you have fun at nursery" becomes "What did you like doing at nursery today?"

"Do you want to use the green paint?" becomes "What colours would you like to paint with?"

"Do you like playing with the blocks?" becomes "Why do you like playing in the block area?"

"Are you going to build a tall tower?" becomes "How can we build a tower that's really tall?"

There are different types of 'commenting' that can be used in your interactions with young children:

**Labelling** – Using nouns, verbs, and adjectives relating to what they are doing or looking at. "There's the helicopter." "He is jumping high."

**Exclamatory Words** – These generate a strong emotional response. "Wow!" expresses amazement and surprise. "Ouch" denotes the experience of pain. "Hurrah" celebrates success or good news. "Phew" conveys relief.

**Self-Talk** – When you talk out loud about what you're doing. "I'm tidying the blocks away."

**Wondering Out Loud** – A way of asking questions without adding pressure to answer. "I wonder..."

'Higher Order Questioning' in practice:

"What would happen if?" can support creating, design, construction, planning and invention skills.

"What would you do next time?" supports evaluating, hypothesising, critiquing, and experimenting.

"How can you fix it?" supports analysis, comparison, deconstructing, and solution finding.

"Why did that work better?" supports understanding, explanation, applying, and implementing.

It's important to know our children, remaining mindful of the questions we ask them, and the time we give them to process these.

Ensure that you provide 'thinking time.' Try not to 'jump-in' too quickly. Children need longer processing time before they can answer a question. Research suggests this can take up to 20 seconds.

Using 'WOW Words' in conversations:

- Rather than simply using the word "good", introduce words such as "fantastic", "marvellous", and "excellent."
- Introduce more advanced words such as "enormous" or "minuscule" instead of only basic words such as "big" or "small."