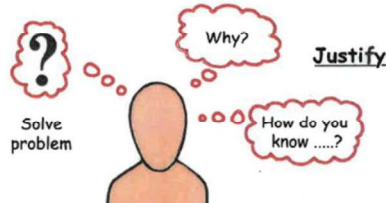


Blank Level Activity Ideas

Blank Level 4 - Justifying



1. Comic Strip Conversations can be useful to complete with a child to explore their understanding of a social interaction, including identifying thoughts and feelings, problems they encountered, and how they could solve that problem. This involves drawing out the situation using stick people with speech and thought bubbles etc to show what happened. Refer to our Visually Supported Conversations – Blank Level 4 leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>
2. Talk to the child about problems they encounter at school, with peers, at home etc and what they could do to solve the problem, or prevent it from happening again. You may need to use visuals to support these conversations, and provide options to choose between if required. For example, ‘if you have fallen out with your friend on the playground would you shout at them, tell an adult, run away?’ etc
3. Support the child to develop their skills around inferencing information by looking at pictures and books together. For example, ‘how do you know the character is sad?’, ‘why did they do that?’

Problem: What happened?

Thinking: Why is it a problem?

How did it affect them?	
How do they feel?	
How might it affect others?	

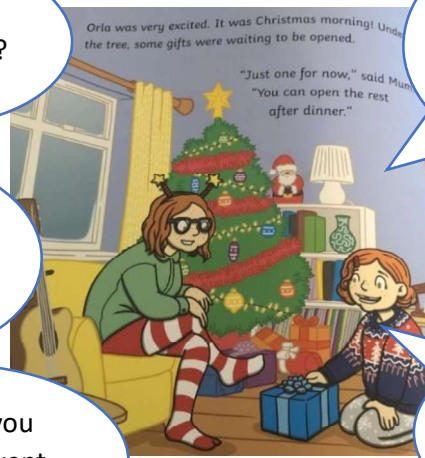
Fix: Next time I should ...

★

What was the problem?

How do they feel and why?

How can you solve / prevent the problem?



What could she do if she can't open the present?

How do you know the little girl is happy?



Michael is showing his drawing of the teacher to the class. Everyone likes his picture and thinks it's really good and funny! They laugh at the picture.

How does Michael feel? Are the children being mean to Michael? Does the teacher like the picture?

What should Michael do next and why?

AT HOME Mr. Goodguess thinks someone has a cold. Point to what makes him think that.



Blank Level Activity Ideas

Thinking about Blank Levels and Behaviour Management

If a child or young person has difficulties with understanding language, they are likely to find it difficult to access conversations around behaviour, peer relationship breakdowns etc. They might find it difficult to answer more complex questions such as 'Why did you do that?', 'How did that make them feel?', and 'What should you have done instead?'. This could lead to the child or young person presenting with further challenging behaviour, additional relationship breakdowns etc as they may find it difficult to understand the situations, what they could do in them, how they and others feel in the situation etc. they may also find it more difficult to remember alternate solutions that have been discussed and recommended previously and apply these 'in the moment'.

Adults talking to the child or young person will need to think about how they can adapt their language and the questions they ask following an incident.

If the child or young person is working on developing their understanding at Blank Level 2:

- Stick to Wh questions e.g. Who, What doing, Where questions to talk about what happened – if they are not able to answer these, explain clearly using short, simple sentences what you know about what happened
- Don't ask more abstract questions e.g. Why did you do that?, How did that make you/them feel? - you could label the child's and others' emotions using short, simple sentences, supported by visuals where appropriate
- Avoid using negative statements if the child or young person doesn't understand these yet. For example, say 'use your indoor quiet voice' rather than 'don't shout', or 'kind hands' rather than 'don't hit'

If the child or young person is working on developing their understanding at Blank Level 3:

- Ask the child or young person to retell what happened, including what people said and how they felt, supported by visuals where appropriate e.g. a Story Mountain or similar to support them to sequence what happened, and emotions cards and speech bubbles to support them to identify feelings and what was said
- Don't ask them to provide a reason for why they did something, or think about what they could have done instead
- Use short simple sentences to explain to the child or young person why they should not have done something, linking to emotions etc

If the child or young person is working on developing their understanding at Blank Level 4:

- You could ask the child or young person more complex questions such as 'Why did you do that?', 'How could you prevent the same problem next time?', 'What should you have done instead?'
- You might want to consider completing a Visually Supported Conversation with the child or young person when discussing the situation with them
- However, if the child or young person does not understand the questions, or does not respond in an expected manner, consider repeating the questions, simplifying your language by stepping down to a Blank Level 2/3 question, and/or modelling possible answers for the child or young person to choose between

Blank Level Activity Ideas

Good Blank Level Resources :

Please see below some resources that we have available on our website, and some items you are likely to have in your setting which could be used to work on each Blank Level. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and you are likely to have other items in your classroom and outside which can be used to work on Blank Levels with a child/ren you work with.

Twinkl have some nice resources on their website for all Blank Levels,:

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/search?q=blank+level&c=244&ca=345&ct=SaLT&r=teacher>

Blank Level 1

The following leaflet from our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>:

- Promoting Early Language Development

Items you will probably have in your setting:

- An interesting container such as a feely bag, pillow case, box etc
- Different real objects that you can take out and name, describe etc. These could be related to specific topics such as clothes, food items etc, or linked to topics being taught in class e.g. different foods that the caterpillar eats in 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', different pictures used for phonics sounds, different equipment used in a PE lesson etc
- Picture books that you can look at together and talk about what you can see
- Different play areas where you can label what you can see, ask the child or young person to find specific items etc e.g. water play, sand table, home corner, animals, marble run

Blank Level 2

The following leaflets from our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>:

- 'Action Words: Activity Ideas'
- 'Developing understanding 'Wh' questions – Blank Level 2'
- Category Skills
- Concepts
- Describing words
- Position words – in, on, under
- Pronouns: he and she
- Size: big and little

Items you will probably have in your setting:

- Different items from around the classroom which you can then ask the child to find from a description of their function e.g. pencil, cup, coat, ball, book etc. these could be real objects or photographs/pictures, and could be general items or items related to the specific topic being taught in class currently
- Items of different sizes, shapes, colours etc that you could use to provide an instruction containing a concept. For example, the counting bears of different sizes and colours so you can ask something like, 'find the big blue bear', or 'where is the red book?' etc
- Pictures books that you can look at together and ask Who, What doing, What, and Where questions about the pages in the book. These could be general books or a specific book which is being focused on in class that week/half term etc
- Photographs of children in the classroom completing different activities which could be looked at together and used to ask Who, What doing, What, and Where questions

Blank Level Activity Ideas

- Small world play items which can be used to act out different actions and discuss these

Blank Level 3

The following leaflets from our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>:

- Sequencing skills – Blank Level 3
- Storytelling skills – Blank Level 3
- Describing Maps – KS1/KS2

Items you will probably have in your setting:

- Pictures books that you can look at together and talk about what might happen next, and how a character might be feeling or what they might be saying in the context shown. These could be general books or a specific book which is being focused on in class that week/half term etc
- Photocopied pages of a book which can be given to the child to sequence into the correct order and practice retelling the story. Again, these could be general books or linked to a specific topic
- Photographs of children in the classroom completing different activities which could be sequenced into the correct order to support the child to retell what happened, and think about what different people are feeling or saying in the photographs
- Access to a dictionary to support the child to look up an item when they are unable to provide a definition of a given word
- Different toys from around the classroom that belong to different categories, so instructions containing negation can be asked. For example, 'find me something which is not living', 'find me something which is not a vehicle', 'find me something that was not used by Vikings' etc
- Provide general longer instructions e.g. 'stand up, put your chair under the table, and then line up at the door' or 'get your maths book and pencil, and turn to the next clean page in your book'

Blank Level 4

The following leaflets from our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>:

- Why and How questions – Blank Level 4
- Visually Supported Conversations – Blank Level 4

Items you will probably have in your setting:

- Books which talk about a problem that a character encountered, so you can talk about possible solutions to the problem with the child before reading what the character did next
- Toys you can use to act out a problem, falling out etc and then discuss with the child a possible solution to the problem, what they could do to prevent the falling out etc
- Examples of written up experiments etc, where explanations about Why something happened, How we know something happened etc can be seen
- Pictures of characters showing different emotions in books, which can be used to talk about How we know they are feeling the identified emotion, and Why they are feeling that way
- Different items which create an action or effect, where you can then ask the child Why something happened. For example, water and sand play, marble run, science experiment equipment, paints to mix together etc

Blank Level Activity Ideas

Make the question more concrete.

e.g. ask 'where is the banana?' rather than 'how do we eat the banana?'

Plan to use 80% of questions and instructions at the child or young person's level, and 20% at the next level – questions at the next level may need more 'scaffolding' to support thinking

How can I simplify my questions?

Use familiar vocabulary in questions

e.g. 'is this a ball or a hoop?' rather than 'what PE equipment is this?'

Relate the question to a personal experience

e.g. 'what would you do if you fell over?', 'how did you complete the sum last time?'

Ask questions about very recent events or objects that are present

e.g. 'what is happening in this picture?', 'what are you playing with now?'

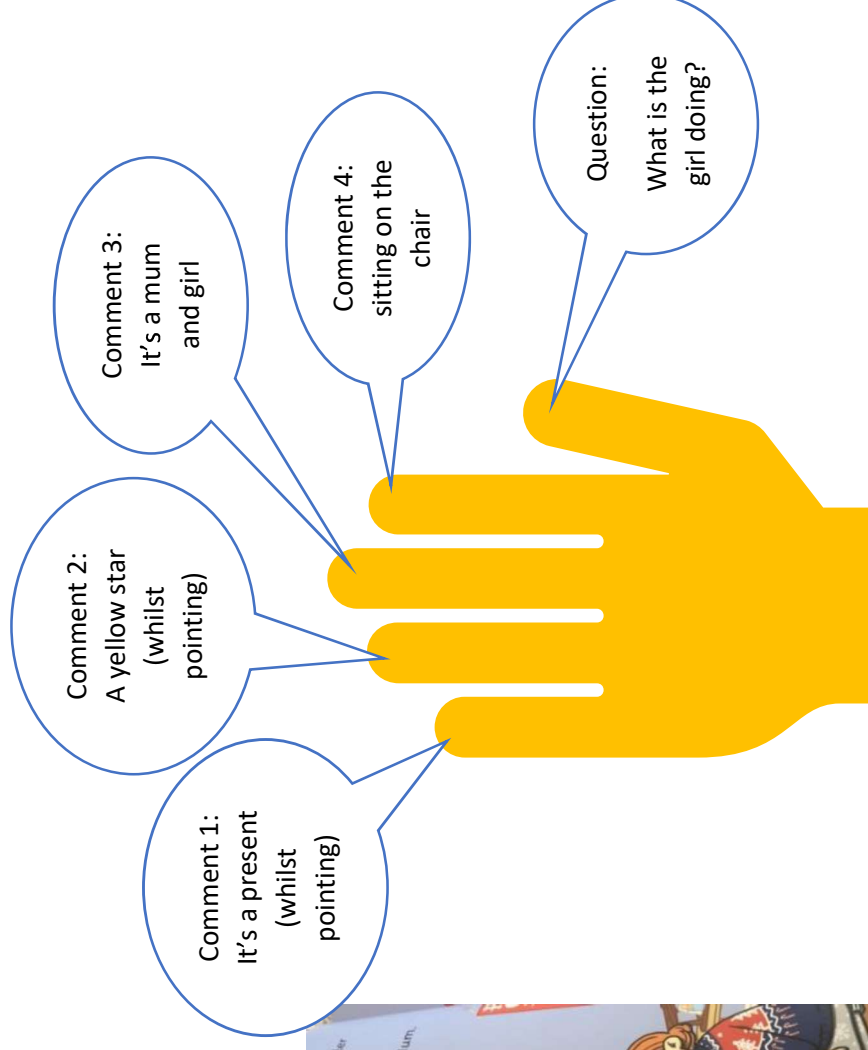
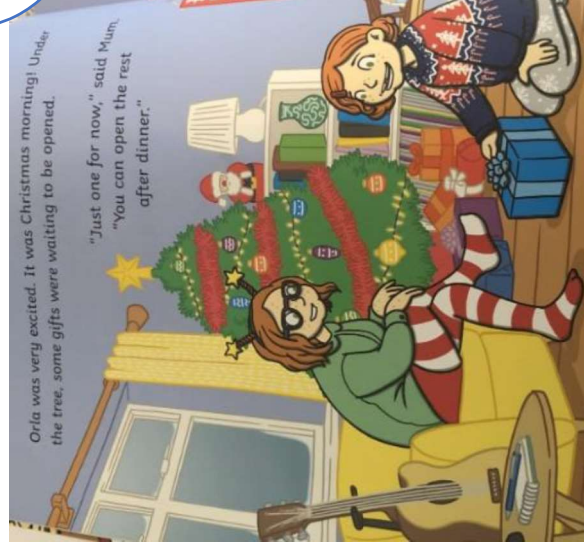
For older children, keep using the abstract questions at Blank Level 3 and 4, providing support and asking questions to help them think through on their own

Consider using more comments than questions :

It can help to use the 'Five Finger Rule' – make 4 comments about what the child is doing, seeing or hearing, before asking a question. For example, you could make 4 comments about what you can see in a picture in a book, what the child is playing with in the home corner, what you learnt about in the previous lesson etc, and then ask the child a question

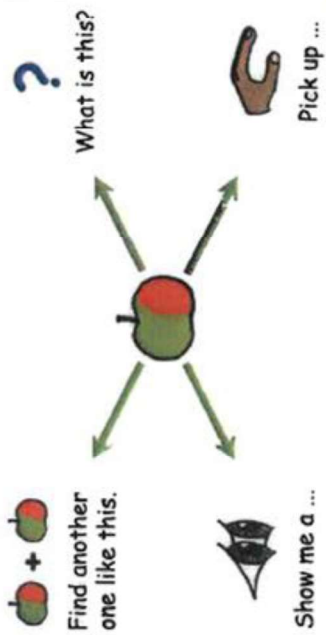
How does asking fewer questions help?

It lets the child take more of a lead in play and conversation
 It reduces pressure on the child to speak
 It allows you to give the child more information and language models

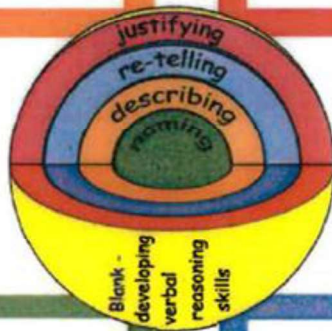
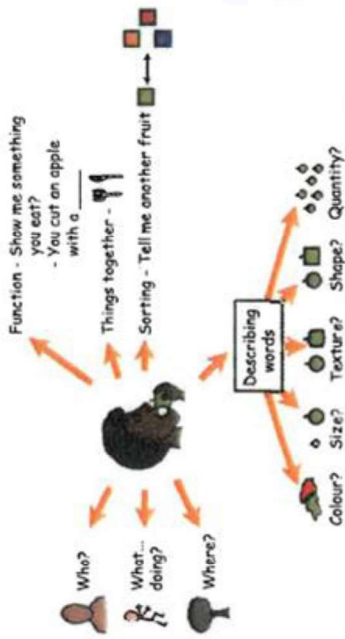


Think about questions

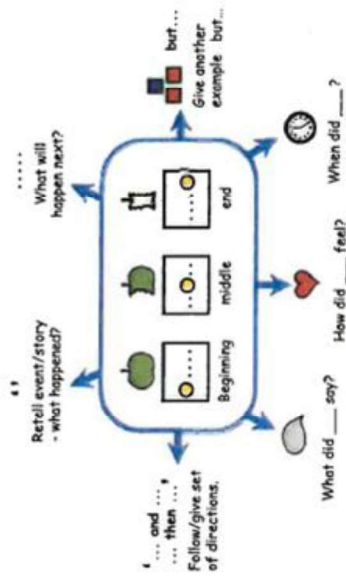
Blank Level 1 - Naming



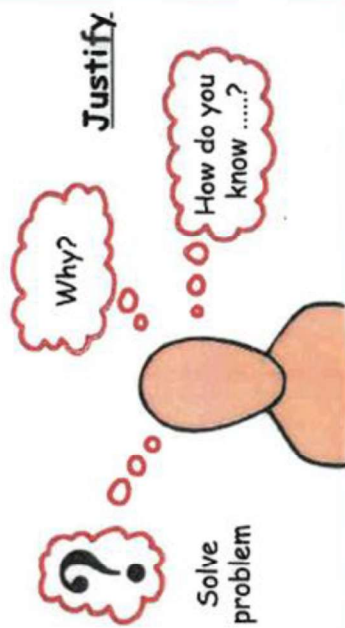
Blank Level 2 - Describing



Blank Level 3 - Re-telling



Blank Level 4 - Justifying



Blank Level Activity

Ideas

Blank Level 1 questions

What is this?

Show me a.....

Where is the...

Find another one like this.



Blank Level 2 questions

Which one do we dig with? (Function)

You eat with a (sentence completion)

What else grows (sentence completion)

What else grows? (Categorising)

Find the big black dog (Concepts)

What is happening?

Show a picture and ask:

Who?

What?

Where?



Blank Level 3 questions

Sequence pictures to retell a story

While looking at pictures ask:
What happened?

What might happen next?

What might X say?

How does X feel?

What does X mean? (Define a word)



Blank Level 4 questions

Why?

What...if

How?

For example:

Why is the boy cross?

What might happen if he asks for help?

How do you know he is unhappy?

How can we make him feel better?



Blank Level Activity Ideas

If you have any questions about the content or wish to discuss resources you could use to work on any of the Blank Levels with a child/ren in your class, please do contact the link Speech and Language Therapist for your setting.

A recorded Blank Levels training webinar is available on request from the SALT service if further information is wanted around these, and how to adapt your language and questioning to support a child or young person's understanding of language

Please also see this short 5-minute YouTube video by Speech and Language Therapists from The Brothers of Charity Services Ireland – Southern Region for a summary of the Blank Levels. <https://youtu.be/r0M3N3wA0Eg>

Please see our website for the leaflets referenced above <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit> and for more information about training we offer professionals <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-training>

This booklet was created by Kelly O'Sullivan, Paediatric Speech and Language Therapist