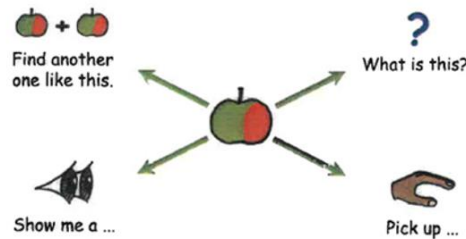
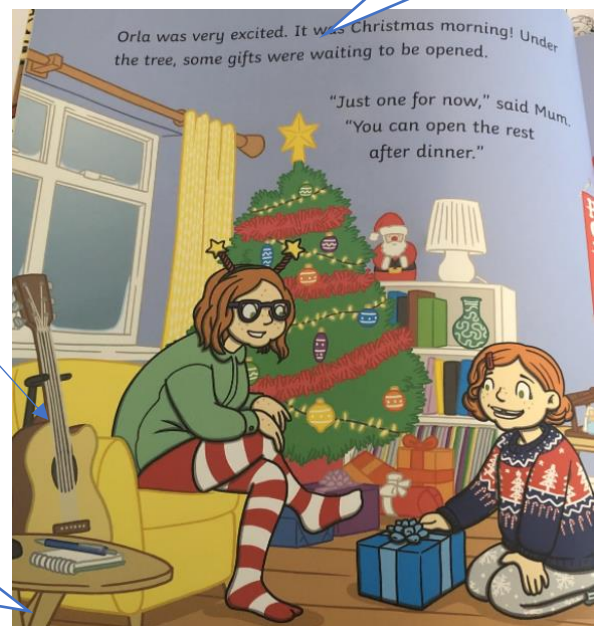
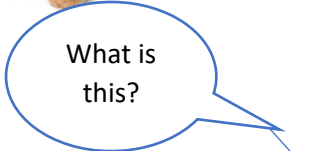
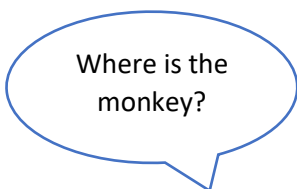


Blank Level Activity Ideas

Blank Level I - Naming



1. Feely bag of objects – taking it in turns to take an object from the bag and labelling it e.g. 'I see a x'. This could be linked to topics in class and/or functional vocabulary relating to categories such as animals or food etc
2. Object Identification – have a row of toys, objects or photographs, and ask the child to point to or pick up one of them e.g., 'where is the x?', 'point to the x?', 'find me the x'
3. You could make this more fun and active by completing games such as 'jump on the x', 'run to the x', 'throw the bean bag onto the x'
4. Look at picture books together and ask, 'Where is the x?', 'what is this?' (Whilst pointing to an item in the picture), or 'find me the x'



Blank Level Activity Ideas

What might this look like in a lesson and/or during a learning activity?

EYFS	Playing in the home corner	What is this? – pointing to a cup Point to the spoon What have I got? Show me another towel Say 'cup'
	Phonics	What is this? – holding up the picture for the target sound What have you got? Find me the snake sound
	Snack time / play time	Where is the apple? Show me the ball What have you got? Find me another hoop
Key Stage 1	Reading 'we're going on a bear hunt'	Point to the little boy Show me the grass Find me another shoe
	Maths	Where is the number 1? Find me another plus Find me the square Show me the 12 on the clock
	PE	Find your PE kit Where is the ball? Show me another bean bag
Key Stage 2	History (Vikings)	Point to the Viking longboat What is this? – pointing to Viking helmet Find me another sword
	Art	Find the paintbrush Where is the paper? What's this? – pointing to the picture being drawn/painted
	Science	Where is the stem? - looking at a flower Find another leaf What's this? – pointing to some equipment

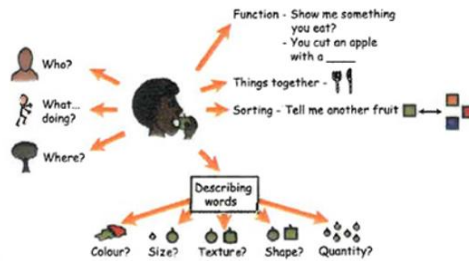
You also might need to specifically/explicitly teach a range of nouns to support the child's understanding during lessons/learning activities.

Teach new vocabulary in a variety of ways and settings and allow the child to hear the word multiple times in context e.g. 'look at this animal – it is a kangaroo'. Young children have to hear new words a few times before they will start to use them so find opportunities to repeat new vocabulary e.g. 'Look – the kangaroo is jumping' 'the kangaroo has a long tail'.

Do not assume use of vocabulary will be generalised from one context to another – provide visual clues to help.

Blank Level Activity Ideas

Blank Level 2 - Describing



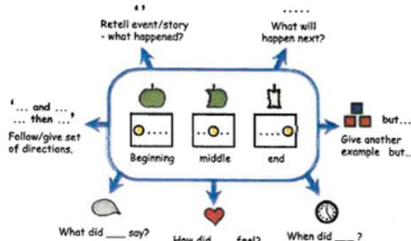
Who is in the picture? What are they doing?



1. Refer to our Developing Understanding of Wh Questions – Blank Level 2 leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>. Work on developing understanding of Wh questions (Who, What Doing, What, Where), supported by Colourful Semantics, to describe what is happening in photographs, in books, in the classroom etc (a list of activities to support with Colourful Semantics is available on request)
2. Work on developing understanding of action words in response to What Doing questions – refer to our Action Words: activity ideas leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>
3. Understanding function – have lots of different toy objects or photographs out e.g. spoon, bed, clothes, food, car, and ask the child something like ‘show me the one with eat with/sleep in/wear’ etc
4. Things that go together – collect everyday objects or photographs of items that go together e.g. knife and fork, soap and flannel, fish and chips etc. Ask the child to sort which ones go together and put them in pairs, or ask ‘which one goes with the x?’, and see if the child can find the matching item
5. Categories – Refer to our Categories skills on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>. Use real objects or pictures of items that belong to different categories e.g. food .v. animals, clothes .v. vehicles etc. ask the child to sort the objects or photographs into the appropriate categories. Start with wider categories e.g. food/animals/transport and work up to narrower categories and subcategories e.g. farm animals .v. sea animals, fruit .v. vegetables, vehicles that go on the road .v. in the sky .v. in the water
6. Refer to our Concepts leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit> for ideas of how to work on concepts such as size, position, and quantity, and our Describing Words leaflet for ideas of how to work on adjectives

Blank Level Activity Ideas

Blank Level 3 - Re-telling



Draw a balloon in the big tree. Draw a cat next to the boy. Draw two chimneys on the house



Find me the one that is not a vehicle

- Following longer instructions – provide a sequence of instructions in the classroom e.g. ‘put your book away, get your coat, and then stand behind your chair’. Play barrier games where an instruction is provided and both the child and the adult follow it without being able to see each other’s work, and then compare the results at the end to see if they match. For example this could be instructions around using specific colours to colour in particular parts of a picture, sorting items into specific places on a picture scene etc
- Understanding negatives – example questions might be ‘find me something which is not big’, ‘find me something which is not an animal’, ‘tell me an animal we don’t ride on’, ‘which of these don’t we need for the lesson’ (with a range of items in front of the child e.g. calculator, ruler, pencil, scissors etc). You could do this with toys or photographs initially e.g. having a row of different vehicles with one animal and asking ‘find me the one that is not a vehicle’
- Sequencing - Refer to our Sequencing Skills – Blank Level 3 leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>. Start with 2-3 pictures the child to sequence into the correct order to tell a story. You could photocopy pages from the book being read in class currently to sequence, use pictures provided by the SALT service or from Twinkl, or take photographs of the child completing a routine activity, e.g. getting dressed, putting their coat on the peg, making a drink etc, or of them completing a learning activity in the classroom, and ask them to sequence these into the correct order to show the activity.



Can you put these pictures in the right order to tell the story?

- Re-telling the story - Refer to our Storytelling Skills – Blank Level 3 leaflet on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>. Ask the child to tell you the story based on the set of pictures they have just sequenced. You may need to model short sentences and how to join these together using connectives for the child initially, and then gradually reduce the support they need as they develop their skills with retelling the story



Can you tell me the story? Describe what is happening in the story/ activity

Blank Level Activity Ideas

- Predicting what will happen next – ask the child to predict what might happen next in the story. You might need to give a choice of two options initially to support the child, or ask them to think about what they might do in the same situation



What might happen next?

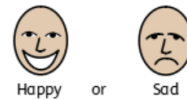
- What might a character feel or say? – you may need to support the child to identify emotions through the use of emotions symbols, and discussions around how they would feel in the shown situation. For example, ‘how would you feel if you had dropped your ice cream?’. Similarly, you may want to use speech bubbles and discussions with the child to support them to identify what the character might say. For example, ‘what would you say if you wanted another ice cream?’

What would the little girl say?

....



How does the little girl feel?



- Define a word – ask the child to define a given word. Show the child a range of objects or photographs to define. These could be linked to the current class topic, functional classroom-based vocabulary etc. Support the child to complete a Describing Map for words that they don't understand and/or can't define. Refer to our Describing Maps on our website <https://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-toolkit>

Blank Level Activity Ideas

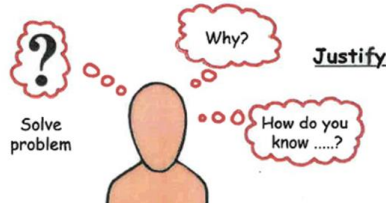
What might this look like in a lesson and/or during a learning activity?

EYFS	Playing in the home corner	Give the doll a cake and the teddy a drink How would you make a sandwich? – with or without pictures to support with sequencing the activity and retelling it X wants to eat some cake. What can he/she say? The doll is eating her favourite food. How does she feel?
	Phonics	Explain how we write a 'k'? What sound did we talk about in the last lesson? What is a 'digraph'?
	Snack time / play time	What happens after play time? How do we eat the orange? What does healthy mean? Which toy is not a ball?
Key Stage 1	Reading 'we're going on a bear hunt'	Put these book pages in the correct order and tell me the story How do they feel (in the cave)? What does 'hunt' mean? What does the dad say?
	Maths	What does 'divide' mean? Explain how to complete this sum Complete a 3 step instruction to solve a sum
	PE	Follow a 3 step instruction to complete a dance move Explain how you serve the ball in tennis What might happen next in the game?
Key Stage 2	History (Vikings)	Tell me about what the Vikings did when they arrived What might the Viking have said? How would they feel when the Vikings arrived? What does 'weapon' mean?
	Art	Explain the steps you need to complete for your painting What does 'shading' mean? How does the person you are drawing feel?
	Science	Put the life cycle in the right order and explain what happens What does 'habitat' mean? Predict what will happen next in the experiment

You might need to use visuals such as Story Mountains to support the child or young person to structure their narratives and stories. It can be beneficial to use these visuals to support the child or young person to talk about real life events e.g. talking about something they did at the weekend, or what they did in the last lesson. You also might need to specifically/explicitly teach functional and topic specific vocabulary to support the child's understanding during lessons. Provide opportunities for pre-teaching, learning and over-learning of new vocabulary and information. When talking about new/unknown vocabulary remember to talk about both the 'sound' and 'meaning' information about new words e.g. how many syllables, what does it mean, when do we use it, what letter it starts with etc. Always model how new words are used within a sentence. 'Word maps' can be a useful tool in talking through new words with the child or young person.

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?

Time

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?

Orla was very excited. It was Christmas morning! Under the tree, some gifts were waiting to be opened.

"Just one for now," said Mum. "You can open the rest after dinner."

A11 AT HOME
Mr. Goodguess thinks someone has a cold. Point to what makes him think that.



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?



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

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

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?'

How can I simplify my questions?

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

Use familiar vocabulary in questions

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

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?'

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

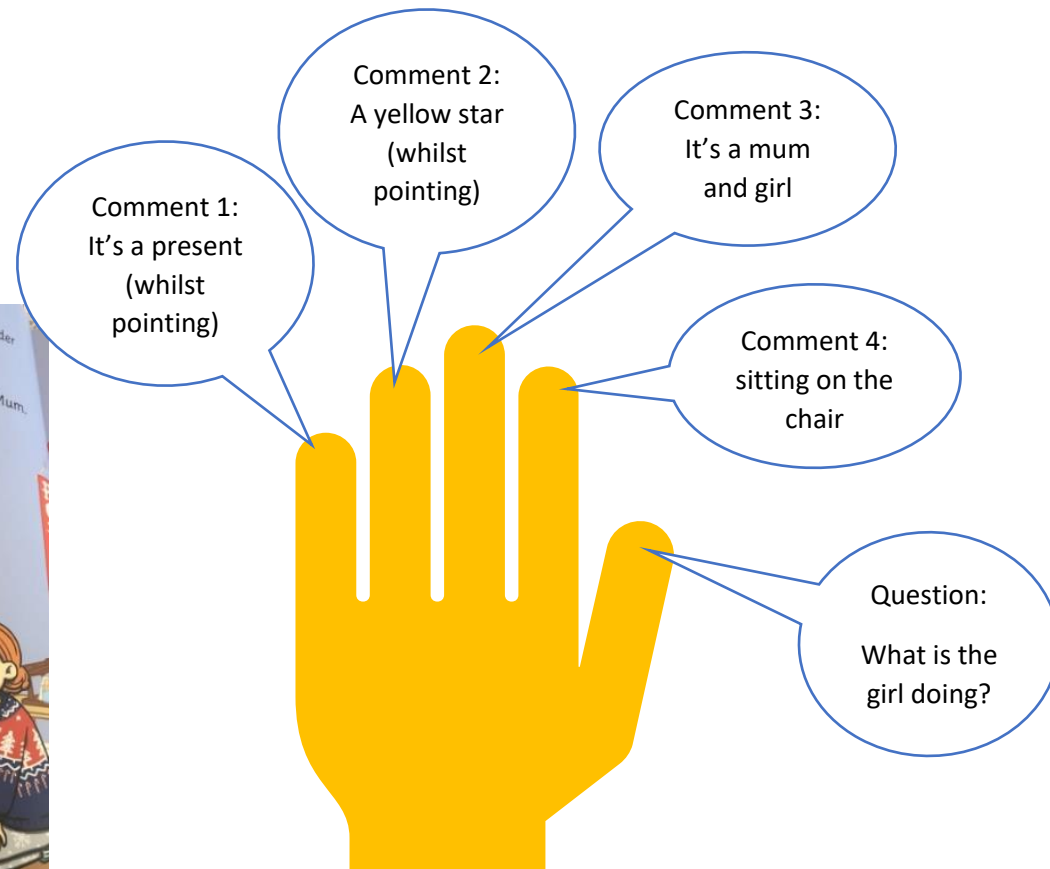
For example, you could make 4 comments about what you can see in a picture in a book, what the child is playing with in the home corner, what you learnt about in the previous lesson etc, and then ask the child a question

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

Find another one like this.

What is this?

Show me a ...

Pick up ...

Blank Level 2 - Describing

Who?

What... doing?

Where?

Function - Show me something you eat?
- You cut an apple with a ...

Things together -

Sorting - Tell me another fruit

Colour?

Size?

Texture?

Shape?

Quantity?



Blank Level 3 - Re-telling

Retell event/story - what happened?

What will happen next?

Beginning middle end

Follow/give set of directions.

Give another example but...

What did ... say?

How did ... feel?

When did ...?

Blank Level 4 - Justifying

Why?

How do you know ...?

Justify

Solve problem

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