

How and why questions: Developing your child's verbal inferencing skills

Inferencing skills are vital to justifying and explaining. This requires a child to draw on outside knowledge and experiences, and formulate a response using their talking skills, which can be difficult for lots of children. Below are some tips for supporting your child to develop these skills.

Why? Explaining and justifying

- When reading a familiar book, you could ask your child a 'why' question. This is easier than asking 'why' during conversations because your child has some context and knows the content already.
- Once they are confident with 'why' questions in activities, you can try asking a 'why' question in conversation.
- Easier: Why does this character feel sad? Why did they run away?
- Harder: Why did you get upset? Why did you take your brother's toy?

How? Explaining

- During everyday routines, you can ask your child to explain how something is done. For example, how do you brush your teeth? How do you get to school? You may need to prompt them (e.g. first... next... then...)

What else? Problem solving

- You can support your child to think of alternative responses or solutions to problems. For example: Child: 'There's no bananas left' Adult: 'What else could you eat instead?'
- You can incorporate this into story time: [The character] was upset and sat in the corner. 'What else could he have done?' [find his friends or an adult, ask for help]

How do you know? Justifying

- During story time, you can ask your child to justify their response by asking 'how do you know?'. For example: adult: 'How do they feel?' child: 'they feel sad'. adult: 'how do you know they are sad?'

