

## Open-Ended Questions to Help Children Think

- Using open-ended questions is a way to stretch children’s curiosity, reasoning ability, creativity and independence.
- Asking open-ended questions gives educators an opportunity to see what a child is thinking and feeling.
- A question like, “What color is that block?” evokes a one word answer. An open-ended question like, “Tell me about the blocks you are using,” encourages children to use their language to describe the blocks or what they are doing.
- There is no right or wrong answer to an open-ended question so all children can be successful in answering them.

Examples of open-ended questions:

- How are they alike, different?
- How are you planning to do that?
- How could we make it work?
- How could we work together to solve this?
- How did that happen?
- How did you feel when you finished it?
- How did you get that to work?
- How did you know that?
- How did you work it out?
- How do you explain it?
- How do you know that is the answer?
- How does it work?
- How did you make that?
- How might you do it differently?
- Tell me about how you worked together.
- Tell me about it.
- Tell me about the character (books).
- Tell me about what you built, made, created.
- Tell me about what you saw.
- Tell me what happened.
- What can we do to get it to work?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What did you see happening?
- What do you like best about it?
- What do you notice about \_\_\_\_?
- What do you think caused it to change?
- What do you think would happen if you \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What happened at the beginning, middle or end of the story (books)?

- What did you learn?
- What makes it work?
- What did you notice happening?
- What problems did you have?
- What was easy?
- What was hard for you to do?
- What would you do different next time?
- What was your favorite part? Why?
- What do you think this is about?
- What could we have done instead?
- What else can you use?
- What does this remind you of? Why?
- What makes you say that?
- What are some other ideas?
- Why is it important?
- Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why did you choose \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_?
- Show me what you can do with it.

**Extend children’s thinking by:**

- Asking questions that encourage language development (verbal, written, and receptive).
- Paraphrasing—repeat what the child said. Then add extra information to keep the child thinking.
- Adding new vocabulary. Use new words like “observe”, texture words (sticky, rough, silky), measurement words (gigantic, tiny, miniscule), etc. when repeating and extending what children say.

**Remember:**

- If you can answer “yes” or “no” the question is not open-ended.
- Open-ended questions require more “think” time so be patient as you wait for children to respond.

Adapted from:

[http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/Questions\\_Children\\_Think.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/Questions_Children_Think.pdf)