

# Tip Sheet: Ask Questions During a Read Aloud

## FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

For additional support on this topic, visit <https://bit.ly/QAskQuestions> to view a short video.

### WHY?

Stop occasionally to ask questions during a read aloud to:

- Check children's understanding – do they really understand what's going on in the book? If not, clear up misunderstandings by rereading or explaining parts that may be difficult to understand.
- Keep children engaged in what you're reading. Asking questions gives children opportunities to respond to the book and makes the experience more interactive.
- Support oral language development by giving them opportunities to talk.

### WHAT?

The types of questions you can ask during a read aloud can be described in different ways. One way is whether they are **open** or **closed**.

- **Closed** questions have a limited number of possible answers and are usually answered with one word or a simple phrase. For example:
  - Teacher: **"What is the character doing now?"**
  - Child: **"Eating watermelon."**
- **Open** questions are answered in a variety of ways, and encourage a much longer response. For example:
  - Teacher: **"What does this remind you of?"**
  - Child: **"I ate watermelon at the school picnic. It was delicious!"**

Another way to think about questions is whether they are **literal** or **inferential**.

- **Literal** questions are answered directly from the book. For example:
  - Teacher: **"What types of animals do lions hunt?"**
- **Inferential** questions require children to think a bit more to form an answer because it's not directly in the text.
  - Teacher: **"How are lions like wolves? How are they different?"**

### HOW?

Use different types of questions strategically to support children's comprehension and oral language development. Start with closed or literal questions to check if the child understands what you've read so far. Then follow up with open or inferential questions to encourage deeper thinking and to get the child to talk more. If a child is hesitant in answering questions, circle back to closed or literal questions. The ability to answer these types of questions might give them the courage to answer an open-ended or inferential question.

For example:

- Teacher: **"These lions are hunting. Are they hunting alone or in a group?"**
- Child: **"In a group."**
- Teacher: **"This reminds me of the book we read about wolves. How are wolves like lions?"**
- Child: **"Wolves hunt in groups, too."**
- Teacher: **"That's right, they do! So wolves are a little like lions. How are they different?"**
- Child: **"Wolves are smaller, and they're dogs not cats."**



### TEACHER TIP

Be aware of how much "air time" each child is getting and use a system to promote equal participation. For example, you could write each child's name on a popsicle stick and pick one when it's time to answer a question. That way, the quieter children who may not raise their hands will have an opportunity to participate, too.