

Tip Sheet: Ask Open-Ended Questions During Read Alouds

FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

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

WHY?

You can encourage children's higher-level thinking skills by asking them open-ended questions during a read aloud. These types of questions usually require children to think more deeply about the book. Asking questions also keeps children engaged. Open-ended questions encourage more extended responses, and promote children's oral language development.

WHAT?

Questions can be **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 are the children in this book eating?"**
 - Child: **"Pizza."**
- **Open questions** are answered in a variety of ways and usually encourage a longer response. For example:
 - Teacher: **"Why do you think they ordered pizza for the birthday party?"**
 - Child: **"Pizza is delicious! I like pizza! I bet those kids like pizza, too."**

HOW?

Before you conduct a read aloud, read through the book and reflect on your own thinking. Where does the book surprise you? Where might you make a prediction about what will happen next? Where can you make an inference about what the character is feeling? Put a sticky note in those places to ask open-ended questions.

Here are some open-ended question starters:

- Why do you think...?
- How do you know...?
- What would happen if...?
- Tell me about...
- What would you do....?
- What happened when...?
- What do you think will happen next?



TEACHER TIP

One way to support children's thinking is to ask a closed question first, and then follow up with an open-ended question. Asking a literal question first makes sure children are tracking what is happening in the book. Once they have a basic understanding, stretch their thinking with an open-ended question. For example:

Teacher: *"What did Peter do with his old chair?"*

Child: *"He hid it!"*

Teacher: *"Why do you think he hid his old chair?"*

Child: *"He doesn't want them to give it to his baby sister."*