

Blank's Levels of Questioning

Psychologist, Marion Blank created a questioning framework to aid in the development of language and comprehension. There are four levels of questioning within this framework. Demands range from simple questions through to more complex questions that require selective analysis, social thinking, and inferencing. Gradually progressing through the hierarchy provides a structured approach to effectively support a child's learning and comprehension skills.

Level 1: Matching Perception

Level 1 questions prompt children to focus on objects and events in their immediate surroundings. At this stage, children are required to concentrate on concrete, observable details. Responses can be brief verbal statements or non-verbal cues, such as gestures (e.g., pointing). Children typically develop an understanding of Level 1 questions around 3 years of age.

Examples include:

- Find one like this (matching objects)
- Point to x
- What is this?
- Who is this?
- What can you see?
- What can you hear?
- What is x doing?
- Where is x?

Level 2: Selective Analysis of Perception

Level 2 questions require a higher level of selective analysis. Children are expected to describe objects and actions in greater detail, group objects based on categories, and understand object functions. An element of recall may be required if objects are not visible at the time of questioning. Children typically develop an understanding of Level 2 questions around 4 years of age.

Examples include:

- What happened? (describing past actions or events)
- Who did that/where did that happen? (recalling information i.e. from a story)
- What size/shape/colour is it? (describing characteristics of object)
- How does it taste/smell/feel? (describing characteristics of object)
- Which one do we use for____? (identifying object function)
- Tell me something that it is a type of____ (labelling object from category)

Level 3: Re-Ordering Perception

Level 3 questions extend beyond elements in the immediate environment. Children must draw on their past experiences and higher-order thinking skills to make basic predictions, understand cause and effect, generalise, sequence events, define words, and perspective-take. Children typically develop an understanding of Level 3 questions around 4.5 years of age.

Examples include:

- What will happen next? (predicting)
- What is a___? (giving a simple definition)
- Find something that is not___ (identifying objects based on exclusion)
- Find something to use with this (making associations)
- How are these the same? How are x and y the same? (identifying similarities)
- What could x say? (assuming the role of another character)

Level 4: Reasoning about Perception

A significantly higher level of problem solving and perspective-taking is required for Level 4 questions. At this stage, children are required to predict outcomes and use critical thinking/verbal reasoning skills to justify their responses. Children typically develop an understanding of Level 4 questions around 5 years of age.

Examples include:

- What will happen if___? (predicting)
- What could x do? (problem solving from someone else's viewpoint)
- What would you do? (problem solving from own viewpoint)
- Why did that happen? (identifying triggers/causes)
- Why can't x___? (reasoning)
- How can you tell/how do you know that? (making inferences based on observation)

References

Blank, M., Rose, S. A., & Berlin, L. J. (1978). *The Language of Learning: The Preschool Years*. New York: Grune & Stratton.

Blank, M., Rose, S. A., & Berlin, L. J. (1978). *Preschool Language Assessment Instrument*. New York: Grune & Stratton.