

Observe and ask genuine questions

Learning happens through play. Children naturally experiment, investigate, observe, and make decisions when they are deeply involved in an activity they are enjoying. Sometimes we can be tempted to interrupt their play to try to make sure they are learning but it's often better to simply watch them and let the play unfold naturally. Once they stop playing, it's a great time to talk to them about their play. Talk about what they were doing and ask genuine questions. Here are some ideas to spark conversation.



"WHAT" QUESTIONS



Questions that ask children to describe their play can help them practice applying vocabulary and explaining their actions and imaginings to others. For example:

- *What were you building/drawing/creating? Which materials were most useful? What part was easy and what was hard?*
- *What was your book about? I'd love to see one of the pictures in it. How did that picture help you understand the story?*
- *What did you find when you were outside? What did you see or hear?*



"HOW" QUESTIONS



Questions that ask children how they worked through challenges when playing or how they accomplished something can help us and the child see their thinking.

For example:

- *Wow! How did you manage to make that structure so tall (or so stable?)*
- *How did you get such a high score at that game? What was your strategy?*
- *How many different things (e.g. blocks, shapes, toys, colours) did you use to create that?*



"WHY" QUESTIONS



Questions that ask children why they did certain things while they were playing can help them practice communicating their thinking and help us get to know how our children approach problems. For example:

- *I noticed that you started over again. Why did you change your mind and decide to do it differently?*
- *Those are really interesting materials you used. Why did you decide that those would work best for what you were doing?*



"WHAT IF" QUESTIONS



Questions that ask children to imagine how their play may have changed if something was different invite them to think creatively, imagine, and anticipate opportunities and challenges. For example:

- *What if it was sunny today? Could you have built that outside with materials you find in the yard?*
- *What if I want to do this activity with you next time? What job would you give me?*