

Developing Thinking Skills

Build strong thinking skills with thought-provoking questions

Talking with your child every day is a great way to build thinking skills--especially if you ask certain kinds of questions. Experts recognize six categories of thinking skills and suggest you ask your child questions that involve:

1. Knowledge. Discuss facts your child knows. "Who is the president?" "What is the capital of Virginia?" Certain words will help with this, such as who, when, what, where and list.
2. Understanding. When your child learns about things, check the depth of his comprehension. "Can you explain one cause of the Civil War?" Use words such as explain, estimate and predict.
3. Application. In real-life situations, how will your child use what he knows? "Apply what our country learned from the Civil War to life today? Include words like apply and experiment in your questions.
4. Analysis. Often things can be divided into groups, such as types of animals. Have your child compare and contrast things. "How are fish and humans different?" Talk about differences, similarities and comparisons.
5. Combining. Put information together to make observations. "Some flowers need lots of sun, and others don't. So what does that tell us about plants?" Exciting words such as invent and what if will help with this.
6. Evaluating. Ask what your child thinks about things. "How would life change if no one had invented cars?" Some useful words are how, conclude and summarize.

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