



Speech and Language Therapy

Blank Levels

The Blank model separates questions and directions into four levels (see further information below). They show how understanding of abstract language develops for children.

Why use Blank Levels?

- To help adults change their language so that the child understands what they are being asked;
- To encourage the development of verbal reasoning skills (e.g. 'what do you draw with?', 'what might happen next?');
- To help set appropriate language targets

Blank Level Two:

Pictures and objects are required for this level. Remember not to ask too many questions i.e. aim to **give four comments to every question** that you ask.

Help the child to answer questions at level two by using cueing techniques:

- **Sentence completion** – give the answer sentence for the child to complete e.g. "What is he doing? He's....." ;"Where is the man? He's in the....." If the child does not complete the sentence, do so for him after you have paused. Forced alternatives – give the child two alternatives e.g. "What is he doing? Is he running or jumping?"; "Where is he ? In the kitchen or in the garden?"
- **Gesture** – use gesture to help the child understand or to cue them in to the correct answer.
- **Demonstration** – show the answer without talking and then ask again e.g. "Where is he?" Point to the bath and sink that is shown in the picture.
- **Sound/syllable cues** – give the first sound or syllable of the answer.



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The following activities also target skills at level two:

- Identifying objects by their function:

Ask the child to find items from a selection of objects or pictures.

Examples of questions and comments:

Comment

We dig with the spade.

We cut paper with scissors.

I'm painting with the paintbrush.

She's driving the car.

I'm reading a story.

I'm drawing with a pencil.

Question

Show me something that we use for digging?

What do we use to cut paper?

What do we paint with?

Which one can we drive?

Show me something that we read?

Show me something that we use for drawing?

- Identifying objects by characteristic or attribute:

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Ask the child to sort items into size, colour, shape, category, appearance, texture.

Sort vehicles into ones that fly, travel by land or go by sea.

Have some spoons, a shiny one, a big one, a dirty one etc. and ask the child to pass you one. Sort the laundry, ask the child find the fluffy sock, small sock, red sock etc.

At tidying up time ask the child to sort the toys e.g. into cars, food, clothes etc.

Sort pictures of food into categories e.g. fruit, vegetables, meat

Examples of questions and comments:

Comment

This is a long pencil.

Here's a square plate!

This ball is orange.

There are five balls.

This is sticky.

This smells delicious.

Question

What size is it?

What shape is the plate?

What colour is the ball?

How many balls are there?

What does it feel like?

What does it smell like?



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- Identifying objects that go together:

Find items that go together e.g. shoe and sock, scarf and glove, paint and paintbrush, bucket and spade and ask the child which go together.

- Describing what is happening:

Talk about and comment on what is happening in pictures, in class or at home. Ask what is happening e.g. 'What is James doing?', who questions e.g. 'Who is painting?' or where questions e.g. 'Where are the aprons kept?' Remember to give four comments to every question that you ask.

The four Blank Levels

Level 1: Naming

Pictures and objects are required for this level

Skill	Example question or instruction
Matching	Find a car like this.
Naming objects, people, actions	What is this? Point to the lorry.
Remembering objects, people, actions	

Level 2: Describing

Pictures and objects are required for this level

Skill	Example question or instruction
Describing what's happened	What's happening in the picture?
Answering who? what? where?	Who is crossing the road?
Understanding and describing functions .	Show me the one we use to chop the food.
Categorising	Sorting zoo animals from farm animals. Name something that flies.
Remembering information	Who? What? Where? (from a statement or story)
Describing characteristics of objects	What shape is this?



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Level 3: Think about it

Pictures may help at this level. The child uses language to talk about language.

Skill	Example question or instruction
Following or giving a set of directions	Put your pen in the drawer and your book in your bag.
Thinking about something from someone else's point of view	What could he say?
Making predictions	What will happen next?
Giving an example of something, with extra conditions	Find me the car that is not blue.
Sequencing a set of pictures and tell a story from them	
Giving a simple definition	What does.....mean?

Level 4: Reasoning

The child uses language to talk about causes and make predictions

Skill	Example question or instruction
Solving problems, from own and someone else's point of view	What could you do? What could the boy do?
Talking about causes	What made the man fall off his bike?
Answering why questions about predictions and decisions	Why didn't you want to go swimming? Why will the snow melt?
Making inferences from what they see	How do you know the girl is worried?

How to use Blank Levels

Be aware of the level the child is able to understand and try some of the following ideas to help develop their verbal reasoning skills. The model is flexible so it can be used across many settings.

Ideas for using Blank level

Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Sorting Identifying items by function	Do as I say / Simon Says Map it out (giving directions)	Problem solving Categorisation & why Odd one out & why



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Blank's levels of questions

Always use real objects or pictures to support understanding at level 1.



Level 1 - Naming

What is it?

Show me a pen.

Find another one like this.

Pictures will support understanding at level 2.



Level 2 - Describing

What is happening in the picture?

Who? Where?

What can you stick with?

Tell me another colour.

What goes with scissors?

What does glue feel like?

Pictures may help at level 3.



Level 3 - Think about it

Get a pen and lined paper and write the date.

What could he say?

What might happen next?

Find the scissors that are not sharp.

Tell me another thing you can write with.

Pictures are not always needed at level 4.



Level 4 - Reasoning

What could you do if your pen stopped working?

What made the man fall off his bike?

Why can't we go outside to play?

How are a pen and a pencil the same?

How do you know the ice will melt?



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