

Closed-ended questions are questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
(Some examples—What color is your shirt? Did you like that book?)



Open-ended questions are questions that require more than a simple “yes” or “no” answer. By asking open-ended questions, we require our children to use more vocabulary and develop their oral language skills.

Open-ended questions open up conversations. When you ask an open-ended question, you don’t know what the child’s answer will be.

Closed-ended questions usually limit conversations to a one- or two-word response, and sometimes they end the conversation.

More Examples

Close-ended question: “What color is this?”

Open-ended question: “You used a lot of blue on your painting.
What does that remind you of?”



Close-ended question: “How many teddy bears are on the block?”

Open-ended question: “What are those teddy bears thinking about?”

A child is using finger paint on the art table, mixing orange, blue, and yellow, and an adult approaches. Read the asked questions to see the difference in the responses to open-ended questions vs. closed-ended questions.

Close-ended question: **Adult:** “What color are you using?”
Child: “Orange.”

General open-ended question: **Adult:** “Tell me about what you are doing.”
Child: “Mixing colors.”

Targeted open-ended question: **Adult:** “Wow! How did you get that color? What did you do first?”
Child: “First, I stuck my hand in the blue paint, then my other hand in the orange paint. I made the paint squeeze through my fingers. It felt yucky. Then started changing colors!”

