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Expanding Sentences

Including Colourful Semantics

AVS Speech and Language Therapy

What to expect from this workshop

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- Overview of Colourful Semantics.
  - What it is, who it benefits, how to use it.
- Brief discussion of other possible strategies to expand on sentences (spoken, written, or through Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC).
- Some time for questions related to this topic.

If you have questions outside of the scope of this training, please contact your child's class teacher, or contact us via our email address.

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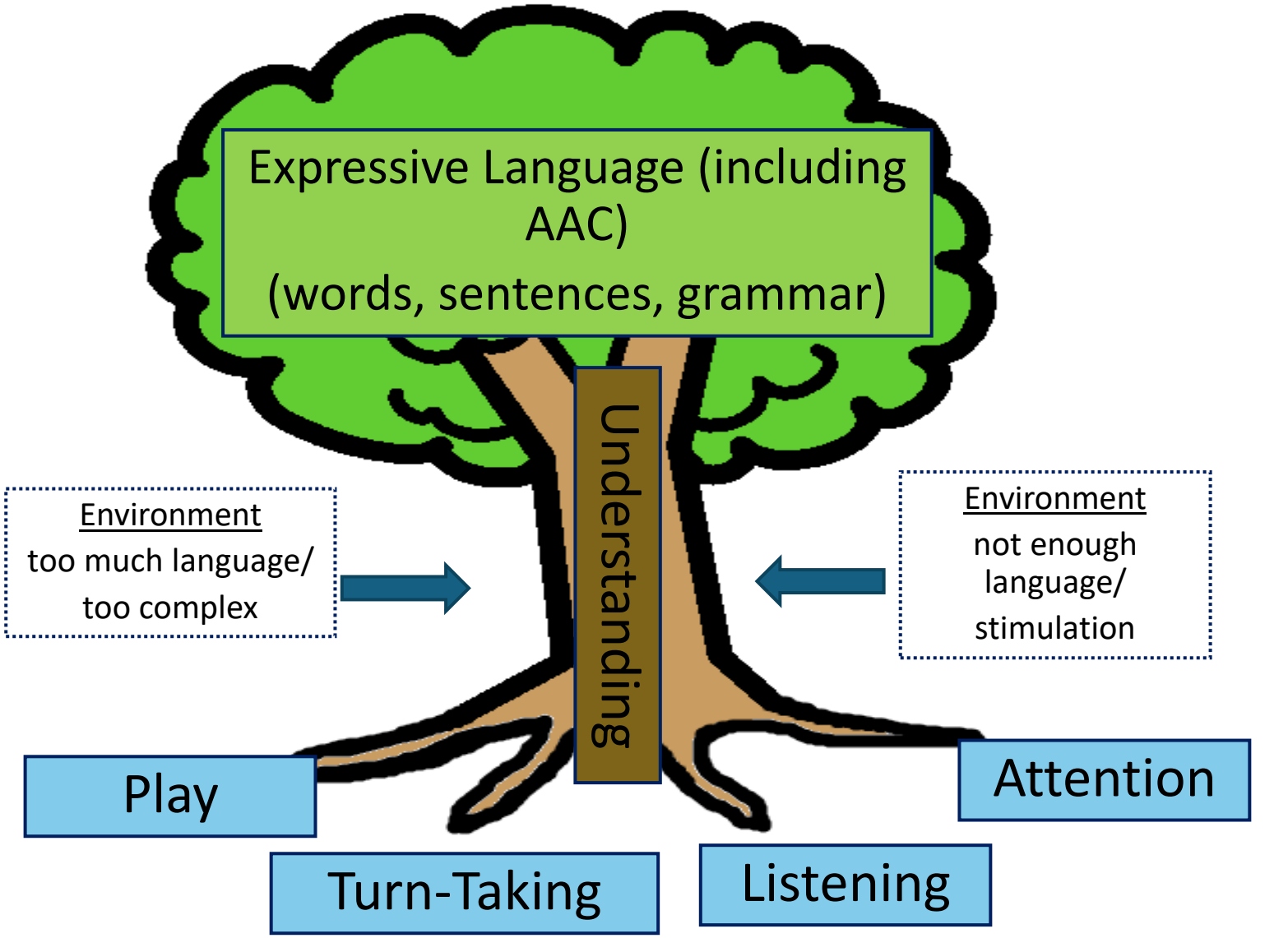

BASIC NEEDS OF THE CHILD! (Including Sensory Needs)

Background to **Colourful Semantics**

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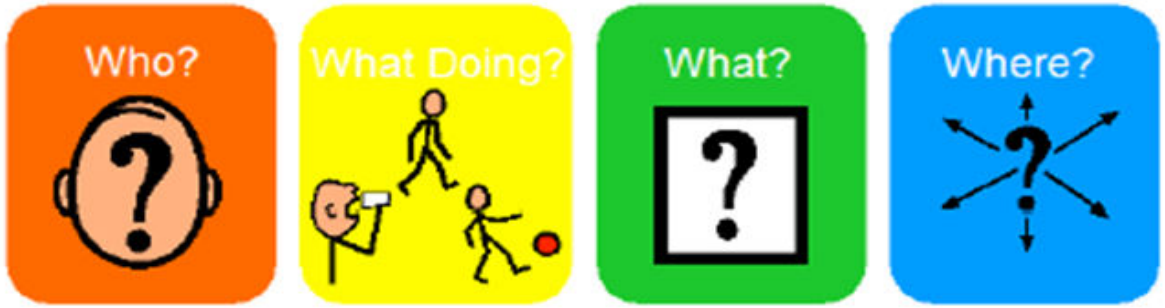
- Developed by Alison Bryan
- Since then, used widely by SaLTs, SLTAs, TAs etc., to support children with identified speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).
- Supports attention and listening



COLOURFUL refe

SEMANTICS is to do with meaning, both meaning of individual words and how words combine to create meaning in a sentence

Background to **Colourful Semantics**

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Colourful semantics works really well for lots of different children and young people who are **developing their understanding** and **use of sentences to communicate.**

- In particular, it can be useful for children who:
  - Show real **problems with putting sentences together**.
  - **Confuse the order of words** within sentences.
  - **Miss out verbs** (action words) or key information from sentences. Or **always use generic verbs** (e.g. do / go / get)
  - Have a tendency to **start a sentence, trail off and then try again.**
  - Always use the **same types of** sentences.

Background to Colourful Semantics

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Why use **Colourful Semantics**?

- Helpful for all children
- Encourages wider vocabulary
- Makes sentences longer
- Helps children to answer questions or generate responses to questions
- Develops use of nouns, verbs, prepositions and adjectives
- Improves story telling skills
- Can be transferred to written sentences and written language comprehension

General Principles

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- Children access the meaning of a sentence through **questions** – the questions are assigned a colour and each colour represents a word or part of the sentence, which combine to 'show' how a sentence is made up: **who**, **what doing**, **what** and **where** questions are used to establish the meaning in sentences.

- **Colourful Semantics** teaches key words and does not focus too much on grammar like:
  - plurality (eg. houses, mice),
  - tense (eg. -ed, ing, will), or
  - possessives (eg. her bike, the boy's kite) etc

Questions – WHO?

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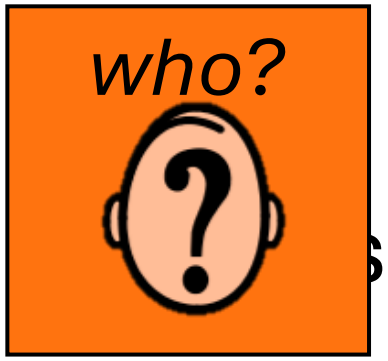
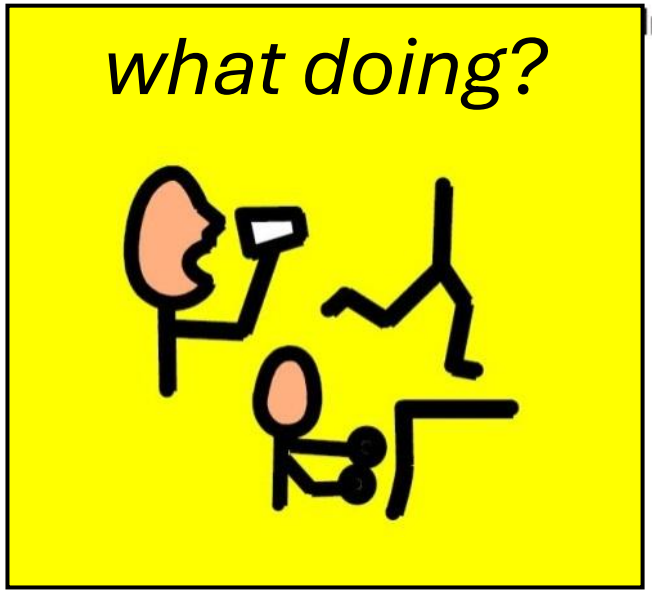
- Each question word is designated a colour, e.g. all words that answer a **WHO** question are **orange.** These Include:
  - **People** e.g. man, baby, Grandma
  - **Animals**
  - **Occupations** e.g. clown, hairdresser, doctor
  - **Pronouns** e.g. he, she, it, they



s jumping?”

the boy

Questions – WHAT DOING?



WHAT DOING = yellow = verbs

- Can include:
  - ‘stand alone’ verbs e.g. run, sit
  - verbs associated with an object e.g. wash (car), brush (hair)
  - different tenses (past, present, future)
  - ‘is’ (copula) – e.g. The boy is tall’
  - ‘is’ as an auxiliary verb: *the boy is running* - in this context ‘is’ is modelled, not explicitly taught as ‘run’ is the verb and ‘is’ is part of tense.

Questions – WHAT / WHERE

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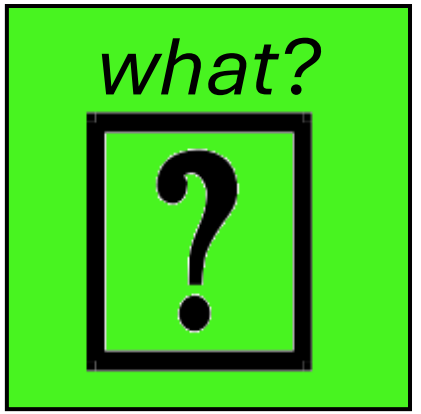
‘WHAT’ = green = objects/nouns

- e.g. brush the *dog*, wash the *car*



‘WHERE’ = blue = location

- e.g. on the car, in the cupboard, outside, at the park

Questions

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Building up to a 4 Information Carrying Word level:

who is doing what where

Getting Started

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- The starting point for colourful semantics will depend on your child's language skills to begin with.

As simple examples:

- If a **child only has single words** and is not yet building sentences, they may need to **start by working on one word level only**.
- If a child is already **using phrases like 'boy eating'**, they might be able to **start at a higher level with 'who – what doing – what' sentences**.

Getting Started - Practical Tips

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- To begin with, don't worry too much about the smaller grammatical words, e.g. 'the, is, a'. If your child misses these out, just model the sentence back to them with those words included for them to hear.
- Start with one level at a time and slowly add in more once you are sure the child is consistently able to identify the previous elements.
- Not all sentences have all four colours. For example: "The girl is sitting on the chair" does not have a **what**, but has a **where** and so won't use the green colour.
- You can't code all sentences – don't worry if the frame doesn't fit
- Can't go wrong with focusing on what the WH questions is asking and what colour goes with that question

Applications of Colourful Semantics

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- Blank strips
- Modelling
- Photos
- Storytime/books
- Interests of the child
- Pausing videos/TV shows

Match + 1

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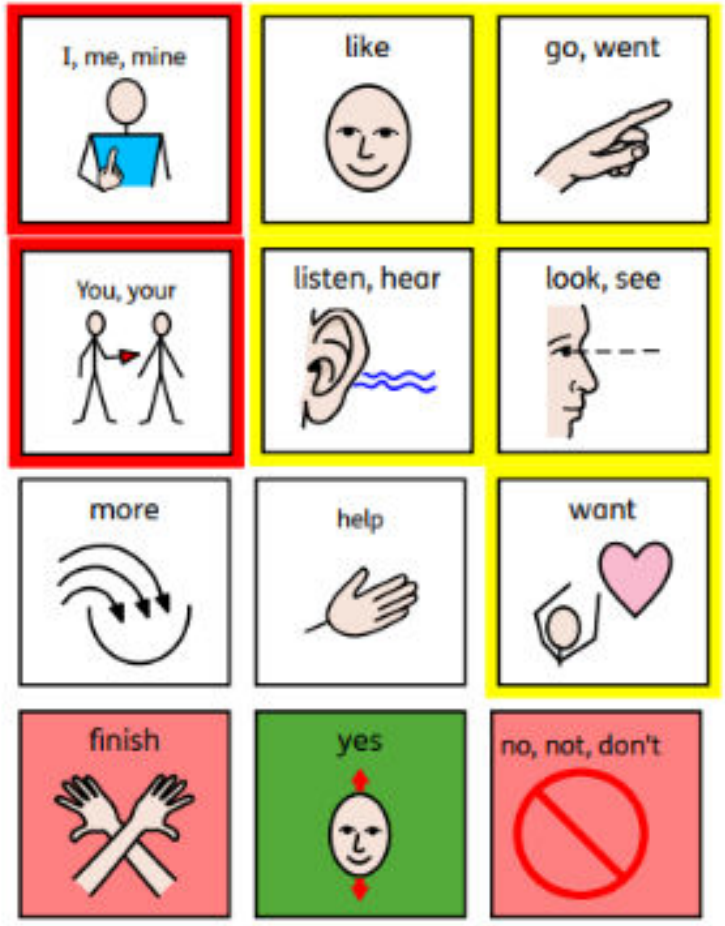
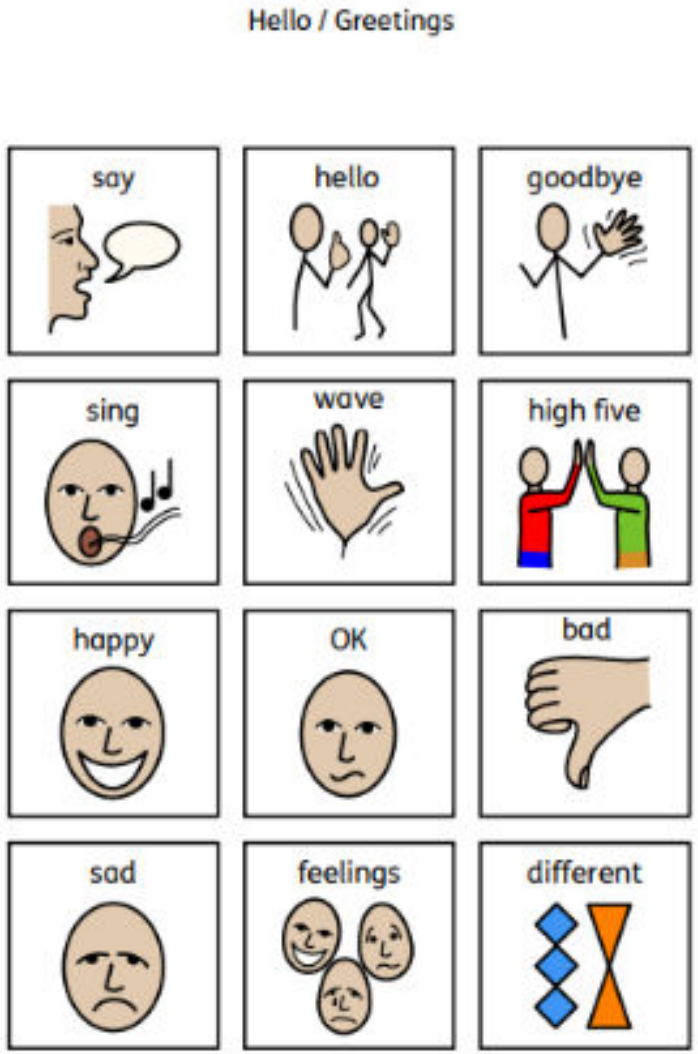
- Expand your child's communication attempts
- 'Match + 1' examples:
  - Child: "car"
    Adult: "**blue** car"
  - Child: "kick ball"
    Adult: "**boy** kicking ball"
- Be sure to use **different types** of words
- Your child does not have to repeat it back – the emphasis is on **modelling**

sing Communication/Topic Boards

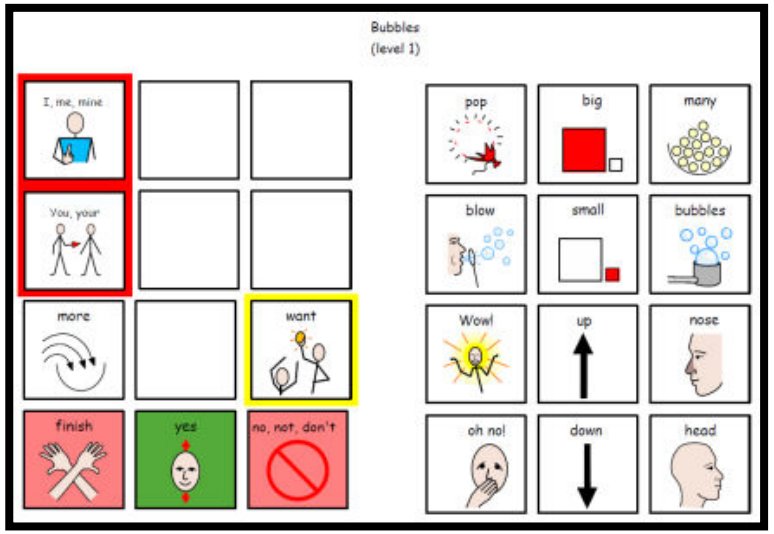




Communication/Topic Boards & Books

The adult points to the board/book when they speak:

- This supports the child's understanding of what is being said
- It also encourages them to do the same when they speak



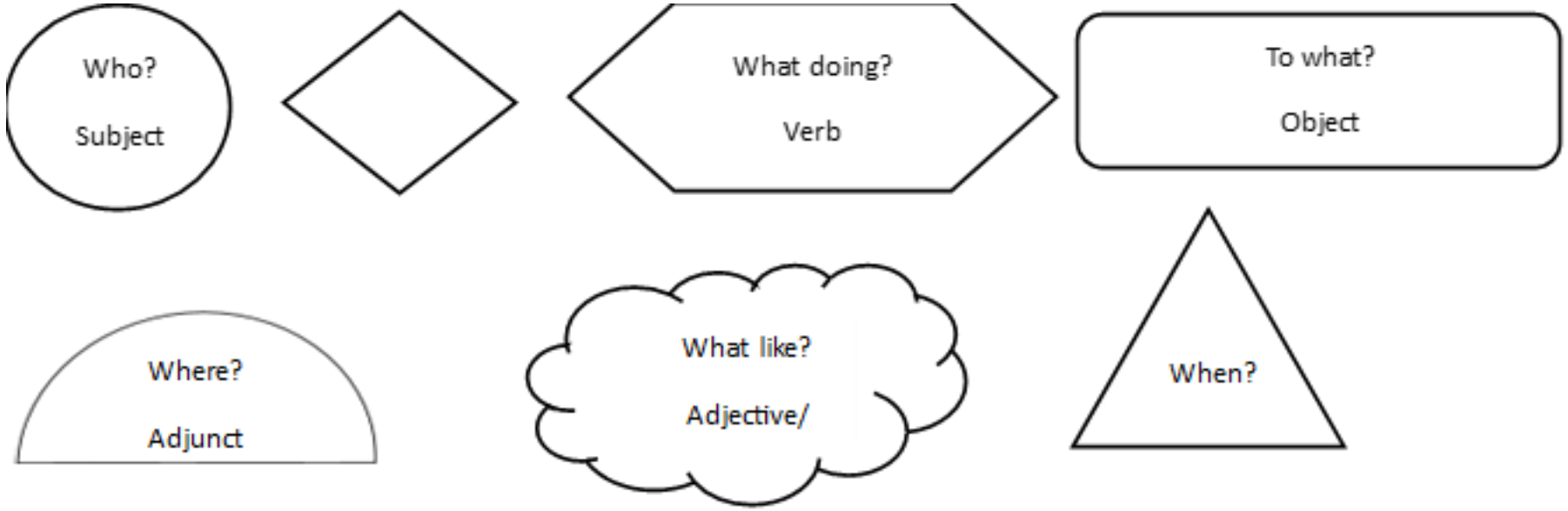
High Tech Communication Aids

What are Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs)?

These are devices that often have set symbol grids and allow access to a wide range of vocabulary.

Shape coding

Shape Coding, like Colourful Semantics, is a visual approach to learning language. It works by focussing on the structure of a sentence and can be used to help develop/expand an individual's language and grammar skills. It can be used with children who do not need symbols to help with vocabulary but still need to elongate sentences and work on grammar, more than Colourful Semantics allows.



Blank's Levels of Questions

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- Blank's Level 1- **questions and information about the here and now**
- Blank's Level 2- **questions about attributes of things in the here and now**
- Blank's Level 3- **reporting and predicting about the past and the future**
- Blank's Level 4- **answering *why* questions and reasoning**

Blank's Level 1

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Talking about things in the immediate environment, or that have only just been taken away. Responses are short and might be non-verbal e.g. pointing.

• Looking for a matching object	*Find one like this*
• Finding an object by sound	*Show me what you heard*
• Finding an object by touch	*Show me what you touched*
• Naming an object heard	*What did you hear?*
• Naming an object touched	*What did you touch?*
• Naming an object seen	*What is this?*
• Copying a simple sentence	*Say this…*
• Remembering pictured objects	*What did you see?*
• Remembering other information	*What did you see?*

Blank's Level 2

Describing what can be seen, sorting and categorising.

- Looking for an object by function (what it does) *Find one that can…*
- Describing a picture *What is happening?*
- Remembering things named in a comment *What things fly?*
- Remembering simple information *Who? What? Where?*
- Finishing a sentence (sentence completion) *You cut with a…*
- Concepts: Naming parts of an object or what it does (e.g. pen lid) *This is the…*
- Concepts: Responding to 2 things about an object (e.g. colour and size) *Find one that is … …*
- Concepts: Naming differences *How are these different?*
- Concepts: Giving an example from a category *Name something that is a…*

Blank's Level 3

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Retelling events and stories/ Predicting events

Examples:

- What happened?
- What will happen next?
- What did X say?
- When did that happen?
- Follow and give a set of instructions
- Sequencing

Blank's Level 4

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Justifying and reasoning

Examples:

- How did you know?
- Why did it happen?
- Problem solving – can you tell me what went on?
- Identifying a cause.

Consider how to simplify your questions

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Simpler Questions	Level
Who was there?	2
What did X do?	2
Where did it happen?	2
What else can we use for X?	2
Point to [insert object].	1
Show me the [insert object].	1

Complex Questions	Level
Why did you do that?	4
What should you have done?	4
What could you do next time?	4
Why can't we run in the classroom?	4
Tell me what happened.	3
What did X say?	3
How does X feel?	3