



ASKING & ANSWERING “WHEN” QUESTIONS @ HOME



“When” questions

Asking and answering WH-questions is an important language foundation and a necessary skill for being a good communicator. Some WH-questions are easier (such as “what” and “who” questions), and others are more difficult (“when” and “why” questions). Typically, by age 4, children are expected to ask and answer “when” questions.

There are different types of “when” questions:

- **Time of day or before/after** (such as, “When do you take a bath? At nighttime”; “When do we get ice cream? After dinner”; “When do we brush our teeth? Before we go to school”)
- **Seasons** (such as, “When do we go to the beach? In the summer”; “When do we build snowmen? In the winter”)
- **Hypothetical** (such as “When would you need an umbrella? When it’s raining”; “When should you call 911? If you have an emergency”)

How to practice:

- Start by asking your child “when” questions. Remind them that when you ask a “when” question, the answer will be a time.
- If your child cannot answer the question, try giving them a choice (e.g., “When does it snow? In the summer, or in the winter?”)
- If they don’t make the right choice, give them the answer (e.g., “When does it snow? It snows in the winter!”)
- Ask if they want to have a turn to ask a “when” question. They may need help thinking of a question at first!

Daily Practice Ideas

Day 1: Focus on daily activities. The answer could be a time of day, or “before ...”/“after...”. Ask: When do we eat breakfast? When do we brush our teeth? When do we eat lunch?

Day 2: Play “nighttime or daytime?”. Ask questions such as: When do we go to school, nighttime or daytime? When do we play at the park? When does the moon come out?

Day 3: Focus on seasons. You can start by showing your child pictures of the seasons, then ask: When do we rake leaves? When is Christmas?

Day 4: Focus on hypothetical questions. Ask: When do we go to the doctor? When would you need sunglasses?

Day 5: Take turns! Ask your child a “when” question, then tell them it is their turn to think of a question to ask you!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Check out these links for more resources and activity ideas

- Practice 'when' questions while reading stories. Read a page or the whole story first, then ask your child questions relating to the story. For example, after reading [Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes](#), ask questions like "When did Pete's shoes turn red?" (when he stepped in the strawberries). After reading [The Very Busy Spider](#), ask questions like "When did the spider start spinning her web? At night, or in the morning?".
- Find more "when" questions [here](#).

Outdoor Adventures



Outside is a great place to engage your little learner in asking and answering "when" questions. Try asking these springtime questions while out on a walk to target both WH-questions and springtime vocabulary words such as;

- Spring
- Sun, rain, clouds, rainbow
- Puddle, umbrella
- Tree, leaf, flowers
- Ladybug, butterfly, worm
- Grow, melt
- Birds

Spring time "When" Questions

When does the snow melt?

In the spring, or when it is sunny.

When do we see a rainbow?

After it rains, when it is sunny.

When do puddles come?

After it rains.

When do we start to see insects like butterflies and lady bugs?

In the spring, or when the snow melts.

When do the flowers start to grow? In the spring time, or after the snow melts.

