

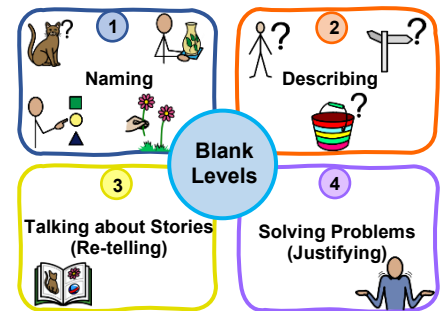
# Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

## Using Blank Levels to develop Verbal Reasoning

### Why?

- Blank Levels, developed by Blank, Rose, and Berlin (1978), support children's language development through structured questioning, progressively challenging comprehension and reasoning skills from simple to complex questions.
- The Blank framework provides a structure for practitioners to reflect on their interactions with pupils and tailor questions to their developmental stage. The approach supports setting realistic expectations, developing understanding, and improving curriculum access.



### What are the Blank Levels?

- Level 1 Naming:** Pupils match perception to identify and name objects directly in their environment.
- Level 2 Describing:** Requires selective analysis where pupils focus on parts of the object in front of them to describe characteristics and functions, including details like size, shape, and colour.
- Level 3 Retelling:** Requires higher-order thinking and understanding relationships between objects and events. Pupils reorder their perception based on context. It involves sequencing, following instructions, defining words, and summarising.
- Level 4 Solving Problems:** Pupils engage in reasoning, problem-solving, and abstract thinking. They predict outcomes, justify causes, use inference, and explain solutions based on their past experiences and knowledge.

### How?

- Identify your pupil's Blank Level (refer to the Blank Level Assessment Help Sheet for guidance).
- When questioning, start at the level the pupil is secure at and gradually introduce questions at their target level, modelling and discussing responses.
- Provide sessions using Blank level questions based on class topics and books.
- Use Blank Level bookmarks to support questioning when reading (examples attached).

## Examples of types of questions for each level

<b>Level 1: Naming Things – when looking at objects, pictures or reading a story</b>	
<b>Matching Objects</b> Find another like this (pointing at...)	
<b>Naming Objects/People</b> What is this (pointing at ...)? Who is this (pointing at the Gruffalo, for example)?	
<b>Point to or select an object</b> Show me the... Find me a ... What is that?	
<b>Level 2: Describing Things – when looking at objects, pictures or reading a story</b>	
<b>Function</b> What do we... with? (eat, draw, chop) Show me something you... (plant, etc.)	<b>Linguistic concepts (colour shape size)</b> Find a red flower. Which is yellow? Point to the big tree. Find two eggs.
<b>Things that go together</b> What goes in the house?	<b>Sentence completion</b> The hen laid a golden...
<b>Categories</b> Find an animal. Tell me another animal? What else... (grows, is a fruit, is square, is a liquid etc.)	<b>Who/What/Where/What doing</b> Who climbed the tree? Who is running? Where is the giant? Where are they? What is he doing? What is the cat doing?
<b>Describing a scene</b> Tell me what is happening in this picture (pointing to a picture).	
<b>Level 3: Talking About Stories and Events (Re-telling)</b>	
<b>Following Instructions</b> Get the books and pens and put them on the table.	<b>Sequencing</b> Arrange the pictures in the correct order. Which picture comes next?
<b>Tell the story/Describe an event</b> Tell me what happened to Cinderella. Summarise the story in a few sentences.	<b>Prediction</b> What will Jack's mum say? What might happen next?
<b>How does the character feel?</b> How does Goldilocks feel?	<b>What does a character say?</b> What does Mum say?
<b>Define a word</b> What does cross mean? Explain what a material is?	<b>Negatives</b> Show me a flower that is not blue? Who is not wearing their coat?
<b>Level 4: Solving Problems (Justifying)</b>	
<b>Inference</b> How do you know it is cold? How do you know...?	<b>Explain why something can't be done</b> Why can't Jack's mum buy food? Why can't the boy see in the box?
<b>Solving a problem</b> What else could ...do? What could you do? What could the girl do?	<b>Justify</b> Why did Jack sell the cow? Why did you do that? Why will it happen?
<b>Identifying a cause</b> What caused the ice to melt? What made it happen?	<b>Explain the logic of compound words</b> Why is it called a handbag? Why is it called a sunflower?
<b>Explanations</b> How can you tell that ... is happy/sad at the end of the story?	

## Example Bookmarks

### Blank Level 1 Naming



Find me .....

Find another like this.

What is this?

Is it a .....

Point to .....

Show me a ....

Who is this?



### Blank Level 2 Describing

Find something that is...?

Where is the...?

What has happened?

When did ...?

Show me the big .....

Show me something you  
..... with?

Show me another....

How are these different?

Who.....?

What did....do?



### Blank Level 3 Re-telling



What happened to.....?

What is a .....

What does .... mean?

What happened  
when .....

What did .... say?

How did .... feel?

What will happen next?

What do you think .... will  
say/do?

Tell me the story in your  
own words.



### Blank Level 4 Justifying



How can we tell...?

Why can't.....?

What will happen if ...?

How do you know...?

Why did it happen?

What could .... have  
done?

Why should we .....

Why can't we .....

What else could .... have  
done?

What would you do?

