

EYFS · PRE-K / RECEPTION / K

Talk-Rich Prompts

40 conversation starters

Why this matters

Children's vocabulary at age 5 is one of the strongest predictors of academic outcomes at age 11 (Bercow review and others). Children from less talk-rich home environments arrive with vocabulary gaps that compound over time. EYFS is uniquely positioned to address this — but only if practitioners deliberately build conversation into the day. Most adult-child talk in nurseries is functional ('put your coat on,' 'sit down'). Talk-rich prompts are about TALKING for the sake of TALKING — exploring ideas, building vocabulary, hearing what children think.

Snack-time prompts (10)

#	Prompt
1	What's your favourite food in the whole world? What does it taste like?
2	If you could have any animal as a pet, what would you choose?
3	What's something you're really good at?
4	What's the funniest thing you've ever seen?
5	If you could fly, where would you go first?
6	What did you have for breakfast? What would you HAVE LIKED to have for breakfast?
7	What's your favourite colour and why?
8	Who lives in your house? What do they like to do?



#	Prompt
9	What do you do when you can't sleep?
10	Tell me about a time you felt really happy

Wonder prompts (10)

#	Prompt
11	Why do you think the sky is blue?
12	If we could live underwater, what would be different?
13	What do dogs dream about?
14	Why do leaves fall off trees?
15	If you were really tiny, what would the classroom look like?
16	Where does the sun go at night?
17	How do birds know how to fly?
18	If we never had to sleep, what would we do?
19	What makes a person 'kind'?
20	Why do we have rules?

Story-thinking prompts (10)

#	Prompt
21	If you could write a book, what would it be about?
22	Who is your favourite character from any story? Why?
23	Make up a story about a dragon and a chicken
24	If you could meet a character from a book, who would it be?
25	What would happen if all the toys came alive at night?



#	Prompt
26	Tell me a story about your shoes
27	What if our school was on the moon?
28	If our class was a forest, what kind of forest would it be?
29	Make up a happy ending for a sad story
30	What's the bravest thing a character could do?

About me / my world (10)

#	Prompt
31	What's the best thing about being your age?
32	What's something you can do now that you couldn't do last year?
33	What do you want to be good at?
34	If you could change something about school, what would it be?
35	What's the most important thing in the world?
36	Who do you go to when you're sad?
37	What's something you're a bit scared of?
38	What's the best birthday you've ever had?
39	What do you love about your family?
40	What makes a good friend?

How to use these well

1. SMALL GROUPS, NOT WHOLE CLASS. 4-6 children. Big circles silence quieter children. Small groups give everyone air time.
2. ADULT TALKS LESS. Pose the prompt, listen, follow up briefly. Resist the urge to teach. The point is THEM TALKING.
3. BUILD ON WHAT CHILDREN SAY. 'Sam said his favourite food is pizza. Sofia, what's yours?' Then to Sam: 'Why do you love pizza?' Push gently for elaboration.
4. ACCEPT ALL ANSWERS. There are no wrong answers to 'why is the sky blue?' Don't explain the science (yet). Listen to their theories.
5. USE THE SAME PROMPT TWICE. The second time, children's answers are richer. They've thought about it.
- 6.



LISTEN FOR VOCABULARY. Note vocabulary children DON'T have. That's what to teach next.

