Why Are Open-Ended Questions Better Than Closed-Ended Questions?

*Open-ended questions encourage children to:*

• use language. Instead of just answering ‘yes’ or ‘no , children need to give fuller answers that draw on a wider range of vocabulary.

• think about their answers and give details to reasonably answer the question.

• elaborate with details, express thoughts or offer an opinion

• be creative

• think of new ideas

• use imagination

• give more information

• problem-solve and use cognitive (intellectual) skills.

Children must search for vocabulary and form sentences which conveys thoughts, opinions, ideas, etc. rather than simply answering “yes” or “no”

• build relationships. Children become more invested in the conversation when they have to actively engage in it with full sentences. They are able to relate something of meaning and respond to the person/people with whom they are communicating. In this way, open-ended questions be used to positively build and deepen relationships.

Open-Ended Questions & Children’s Self-Esteem

When children are asked open-ended questions, it shows them that their opinions, ideas, thought, feelings, etc, matter. After all, if you didn’t want to know, you wouldn’t ask.

Therefore, asking open-ended questions says to a child that their contribution matters. You want to know what they think. You value their opinion. You are genuinely interested in their ideas. All of this goes to strengthening your child’s positive self-esteem and self-image, as well as strengthening your relationship with your child.

## Using Open-Ended Questions With Closed-Ended Questions

Sometimes, it’s helpful to combine open end questions and closed questions together. For example, if you’re reading a book about a boy at the zoo, you could ask:

• **Closed-ended question:** Have you ever been to the zoo?  
• **Open-ended question:**“What happened when you went there?” Or “What did you enjoy the most about going to the zoo?”

• **Closed-ended question:**“Which animal did you like the most?”  
• **Open-ended question:**“Why did you like the … (giraffes)… the most?” “What did they do when you were watching them?”

In these examples, the **closed-ended questions** are used to establish facts upon which the **open-ended questions** can be used to expand the conversation with more information, details, thoughts, opinions, etc.