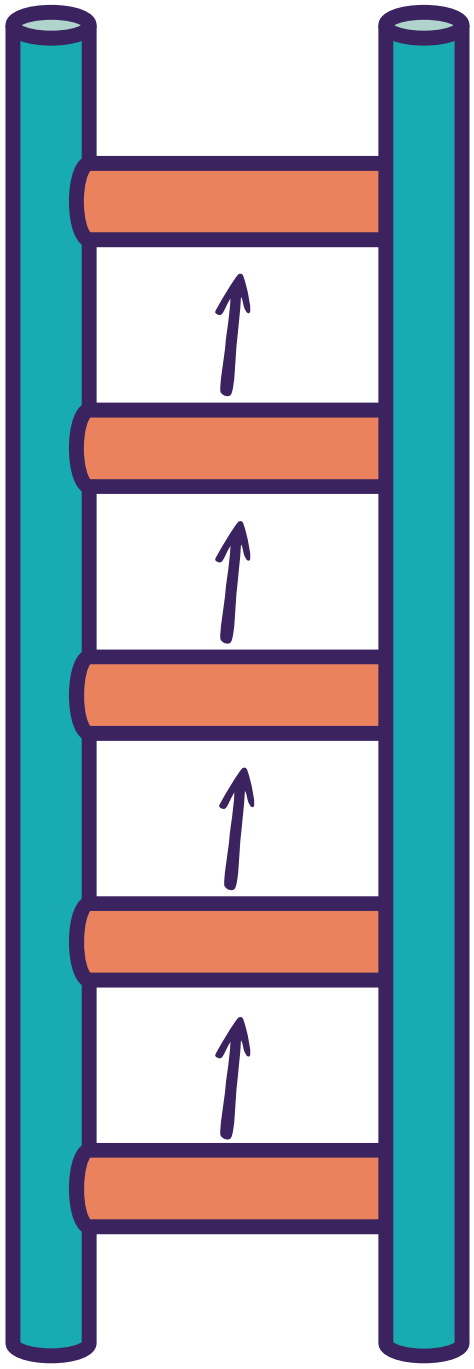
LANGUAGE LADDER



- OPEN-ENDED QUESTION WITH NO PREDICTABLE RESPONSE
- REASONING QUESTION WITH A LIMITED RANGE OF ANSWERS
- REASONING QUESTION WITH A PREDICTABLE RESPONSE
- REASONING QUESTION WITH TWO CHOICES
- SPELL A FACTUAL / KNOWN ANSWER

Start here!

LANGUAGE LADDER

The language ladder is a scaffolding concept that helps us know when we need to make a question easier to meet our students where they are, easing up on that cognitive demand, or how to offer a slight stretch, so they can be successful.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION WITH NO PREDICTABLE RESPONSE

It takes time and LOTS of practice. Sometimes people try to jump to this step too soon or put too much emphasis on the ability to answer open ended questions quickly. Remember that this process can take a while, and that's okay. Make sure your student has the confidence and skills to answer predictable questions well before trying to move to open-ended questions.

REASONING QUESTION WITH A LIMITED RANGE OF ANSWERS

These types of question have answers that span the range of a category - it's easy to think in terms of "types" of things: vehicles, fruits, plants, body parts, etc. Students should be spelling out answers at this step.

REASONING QUESTION WITH PREDICTABLE RESPONSE

This task is typically phrases as a fill-in-the-blank sentence that has one really logical answer. Students should be spelling out answers at this step.

REASONING QUESTION WITH TWO CHOICES

After presenting a little slice of age-appropriate academic content, create a reasoning question that allows the student to practice a purposeful response. Students can respond to this choice using any method they're comfortable with - pointing to the choices written on a whiteboard, finding the first letter of their answer on a stencil or letterboard, or even spelling the entire word!

SPELL A FACTUAL / KNOWN ANSWER

This task is low pressure and involves a low cognitive demand because it has one set answer where you can focus on establishing a rapport, getting into a rhythm, and gauging the level of support or prompting needed for the student to be successful.

Start here!

When trying a new step on the language ladder, if your student is not successful, first **TEACH**, then **PROMPT**, then **TAKE A STEP DOWN** to a skill where they previously experienced success.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Take a look at the real-world examples of different types of questions that match up with each step on the language ladder.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION WITH NO PREDICTABLE RESPONSE

Teach: Compose your own tall tale with a larger than life hero who solves their problems in creative ways.
Ask: What larger than life characteristic does your hero have?

REASONING QUESTION WITH A LIMITED RANGE OF ANSWERS

Teach: Organs are groups of tissues that work together to perform a specific function.
Ask: Your lungs are an organ. Can you tell me another organ in your body?

REASONING QUESTION WITH PREDICTABLE RESPONSE

Teach: It was a dark and stormy night.
Ask: When it's stormy outside, you might see lightning in the sky, and you might also hear loud _____.... What's that thing you might hear during a storm? You might hear ....

REASONING QUESTION WITH TWO CHOICES

Teach: In May 1915, the Germans sank the British ocean liner, The Lusitania.
Ask: The Lusitania was a big ship. Would you be more likely to find a ship like this in the OCEAN or in a STREAM?
If something sinks, does it stay at the SURFACE of the water or go UNDERWATER?
If another nation sunk one of your ships, do you think they would be your ALLY or your ENEMY?
Are Germany and Britain the names of COUNTRIES or CITIES?
Back in 1915, if you were a regular person and you wanted to cross the Atlantic Ocean, would you be more likely to sail on a SHIP or fly in an AIRPLANE?

SPELL A FACTUAL / KNOWN ANSWER

Teach: Plant cells are contained within a cell wall.
Ask: Let's spell "wall."

Start here!

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