

Ask follow-up questions

When pupils give a correct answer, you can increase the challenge and extend their understanding by giving them further, more complex questions such as:

- Ask how or why
- Ask for another way to answer
- Ask for better vocabulary
- Ask pupils to integrate a related skill

These can be used in all subjects and phases.

Ask how or why

Rosenshine (2012) found that more successful teachers ask more process questions. Asking pupils to explain how or why they have come to an answer is an example of a process question as it checks pupils reasoning and working-out. This is a simple way to stretch pupils' answers. By doing this, you are:

- Checking pupils' level of understanding and possibly revealing otherwise hidden misconceptions.
- Extending their understanding by asking pupils to verbalise their thinking - elaboration helps pupils to build mental models.

Below is an example of what this might look like in practice:

Teacher: What is the perimeter of the square?

Pupil: 20 metres

Teacher: How do you know?

Pupil: Because all the sides add up to 20

Teacher: How did you know the length of all the sides?

Pupil: Because one side was 5 metres and because it's a square, all sides are the same length.

Teacher: So...

Pupil: So, all the sides are 5 metres and 4 times 5 equals 20.

In the example above, the teacher has pushed the pupil to reveal their deeper understanding by asking 'how' questions. It has helped the pupil make links with other knowledge, enabling them to provide a comprehensive answer.

Ask for another way to answer

Sometimes there is more than one way to give an answer. You can check pupil understanding by asking them to give another way of solving a problem or explaining their reasoning. Below is an example of what this might look like in practice:

Teacher: Fill in the blanks: $__ + __ = 4$

Pupil: Three plus one equals four

Teachers: Can you think of another way to make four?

Pupil: Another way to make four is two plus two.

Teacher: What if one was the first number in the equation? $1 + __ = 4$

Pupil: One plus three equals four.

By doing this, you help pupils to build links within their knowledge and deepen their understanding of the concept, which in this case was addition.

Ask for better vocabulary

Pupils often provide answers in the simplest language, especially when they are unfamiliar with certain vocabulary. A great way to enhance vocabulary is by probing pupils to improve their language choices and use target vocabulary. In Early Years, it might look like this:

Teacher: Why was mouse scared?

Pupil: Because he saw a cat.

Teacher: Because he saw a what cat? Can you use an adjective to describe it?

Pupil: Because he saw a scary cat.

By including the 'what', the teacher has supported the pupil by indicating where the descriptive word should go in the sentence, providing a scaffold for their next response. Whereas, in key stage one, the prompting might be slightly different:

Teacher: Why was the mouse scared?

Pupil: Because he saw a cat.

Teacher: Can you use two adjectives to describe the cat?

Pupil: Because he saw a large, scary cat.

Teacher: OK, how about using one of our vocabulary words?

Pupil: Because he saw a large, menacing cat.

Here the teacher has prompted the pupil to challenge themselves and improve their initial response. In other subjects or contexts, you might use the same structure to encourage pupils to use subject-specific or technical language.

Ask pupils to integrate a related skill

To help pupils build connections between their learning from one lesson to the next, you can ask pupils to integrate one skill with another they have recently mastered. The example below demonstrates how this might look in a primary PE lesson:

Teacher: Who can show me a narrow movement?

Pupil: Walks around with arms up high.

Teacher: Who can show me a low, narrow movement.

Pupil: Slithers narrowly on the floor.

Teacher: Who can show me a low, rolling narrow movement.

Pupil: completes a pencil roll.

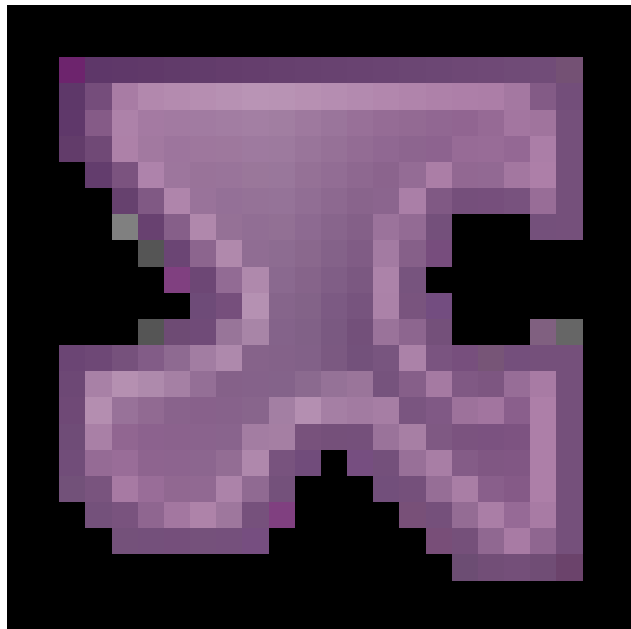
By doing this, you are joining up pupils' learning and connecting new learning with existing knowledge in their mental model, in this case, of how to move your body in different ways.

Asking follow-up questions in action

There are many ways you can extend pupils' understanding when they present correct answers. Watch the video of a teacher challenging pupils with follow-up questions to extend their understanding. Whilst watching, consider the following questions and record your responses in the [notes tab](#) (or your own notebook):

- What type(s) of 'follow-up questions were used?
- How did these impact pupils' responses?

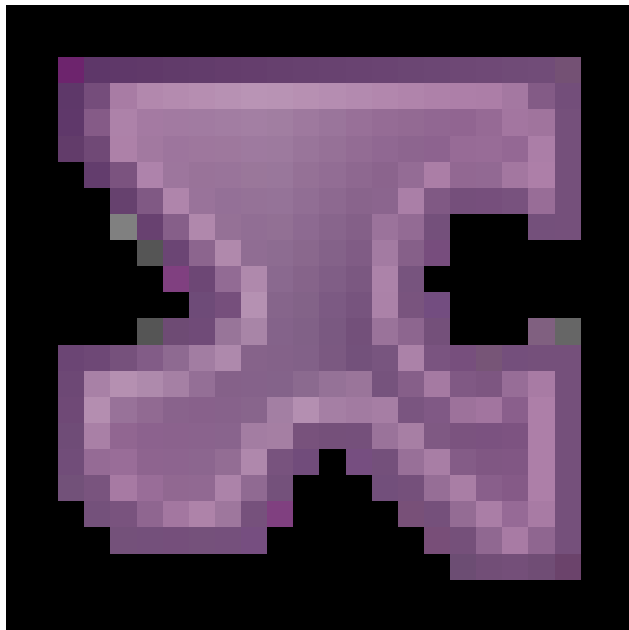
Early years



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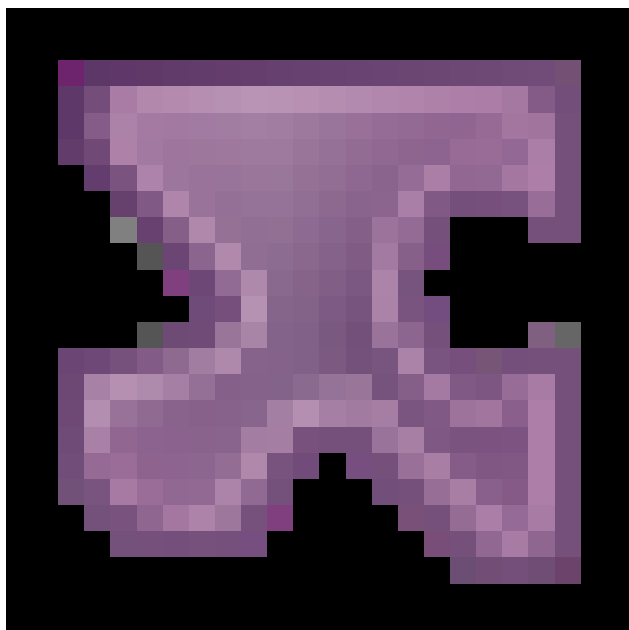
Primary



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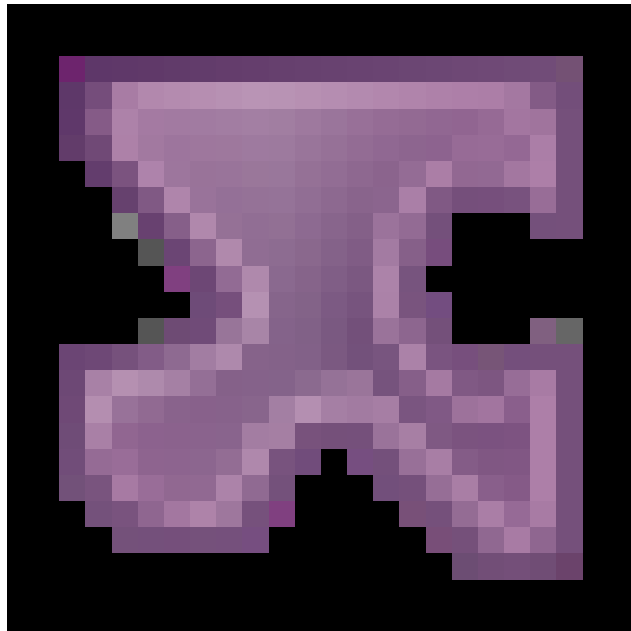
Secondary



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Specialist



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