



Partner, Facilitate and Reflect with Open-Ended Questions

What is an open-ended question?

"An open-ended question is a question that cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no" response."
(Wikipedia)



During the Parents As Teachers (PAT) Foundational and Model Implementation training, FACE parent educators learn that all aspects of the curriculum incorporate the approach of partnering, facilitating, and reflecting with parents during personal visits, and throughout their family's time with the FACE program.

This style of asking questions shows parents that you genuinely care what they are thinking, and gives them a chance to set the direction for the discussion. When asked an open-ended question, they are likely to share more about issues important to them. Basic yes/no questions often bring yes/no answers, then silence. With open-ended questions, the discussion that follows may result in problem solving and goal setting that supports parent, child and family growth.

Open-ended questions and our Intent as we plan for personal visits

Establishing the Intent for each area of emphasis (Parent-Child Interaction, Development-Centered Parenting, Family Well-Being) is an important part of planning visits using the PAT curriculum.

Open-ended questions can help you focus on your Intent for each area as you plan and conduct visits. On the PAT *Foundational Visit* or *Planning Guides*:

- First write the Intent for an area of emphasis. Remember that the Intent is a short statement of what you want to accomplish in that area during your time with the family.
- Next, choose a Parent Educator Resource, Key Points, open-ended Prompts/Questions, and Parent Handouts related to the Intent.

Below is an example in the Development-Centered Parenting area of emphasis.

Sometimes parent educators write a single word, like "Nutrition" as the Intent.

TIP: Think about a short sentence that might make this Intent clearer. For example, "Discuss healthy food choices, and how children's eating changes as they grow."

The parent educator in our example chose the following Prompts/Questions, Parent Educator Resource/Key Points, and Parent Handout - all related to nutrition.

- Prompts/Questions to understand parent perspective:
 - ✓ How are your child's eating habits?
 - ✓ Is there anything you would like to change?

TIP: How could "Is there anything you would like to change?" be made into an open-ended question?

- Parent Educator Resource: Feeding Older Babies and Toddlers
Key Points:
 - ✓ The challenges of helping children build healthy relationships with food as they get older
 - ✓ Children ages 1 to 2 1/2 are learning to recognize hunger, enjoy food, etc.
- Parent Handout: Tips for Making Mealtimes Pleasant and Healthy

With practice, asking open-ended questions comes naturally, and contributes to building relationships with FACE families.

Over time, practice will make it easier to write open-ended questions in your visit plans, and to watch for opportunities to ask open-ended questions during visits.

Let's explore a few more examples of Prompts/Questions for each area of a personal visit.

TIP: Some of the examples come from the *PAT Toolkit*. Refer to the "Personal Visit Prompts" section in the *Toolkit*. Some are yes/no questions. Practice changing them to open-ended questions.

Opening

- What are your questions from the last visit?
- Have things been going ok since our last visit?

Parent-Child Interaction

- What have you noticed about your child's development?
- I notice that when you...your child...(PAT Toolkit)
- "What do you think he is thinking?"

Development-Centered Parenting

- How much time are you able to spend with your baby?
- What do you do when your baby cries for a long time?
- What happens when his routines need to change due to things like trips to town, appointments, visitors, etc.?
- Have you had discussions about "stranger danger" in your family?"

Family Well-Being

- Do you have a regular exercise routine?
- How did it go? (could be in reference to a medical/dental appointment)
- What are your thoughts about your own education?
- What changes would you like to see? (PAT Toolkit)

Closing

- What are your thoughts on today's visit?
- During the visit, we talked quite a bit about healthy snacks. Maybe next time I could bring along some new ideas. (open-ended prompt)
- What stood out for you during this visit, maybe something you learned, or something you are planning to try out?

TIP: Notice reminders about open-ended questions throughout the PAT Curriculum.

PAT Curriculum Examples

- Parent Handout: *Parenting Makes a Difference* (p. 507)
- Activity Page: *How Do I Sound? Talking and Taking Turns in Conversations* (p. 993)

In conclusion, we encourage you to practice! Try changing yes/no questions to open-ended ones together during a FACE team meeting. Listen to yourself asking day-to-day questions of your colleagues and family. How could a yes/no question become an open-ended question? How does it change the conversation?

As you facilitate, partner, and reflect with FACE families keep those open-ended questions and prompts coming! Follow the parent's lead, and let the conversation guide you together to the family's next steps, or next goal.

Citations

Arden Coaching (2020). *How (and Why) to ask Open-ended Questions*.

<https://ardencoaching.com/how-and-why-to-ask-open-ended-questions/>.

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Parents As Teachers National Center, Inc. (2017). *Foundational Curriculum*. St. Louis, MO: Author.

Wikipedia. Open-ended question. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-ended_question