

Understanding Attention Check Questions

The purpose of attention check questions is to gauge whether the child is actively listening and attending to a lesson. Otherwise, it can be difficult to ascertain whether a child is truly paying attention as some children may be paying attention while they are not looking at you.

Attention check questions should be simple and brief, and should be asked randomly throughout a lesson (not just when a child does not look like they are paying attention). They may be asked both during formal instructional time (i.e., when the teacher is talking), as well as individual or small group work. Chances are that you already ask this child several attention check questions daily. With the DRC, you are structuring how you do this so that you ask the same number of questions each day and gradually increase the number you expect the child to answer correctly – i.e., increase the amount that the child is paying attention. Sample questions are below.

Easy:

- What page are we on?
- What problem is next?
- What vocabulary word did we just review?
- What instructions did I just give?
- Point to where we are in the workbook.
- What is the next word on our list?
- What did I just say?
- Who answered the last question and what did they say?
- Where did I say to [put the scissors/hand in your papers/etc]?

More difficult:

- What were the last two examples given?
- Who answered the question before Bill?
- What questions did I assign for math homework a few minutes ago?

In the context of a lesson – examples:

“Thomas Jefferson and John Adams signed the Declaration of Independence. They both went on to become Presidents of the United States.”

- *“Julie, what did Jefferson and Adams sign?”*
- *“Steve, which presidents signed the Declaration of Independence?”*
- *“Erika, what position did Jefferson and Adams go on to hold?”*

“Okay class. Put your science workbooks in your desk, your pencils in the bin, and get your backpacks.”

- *“Alex, where did I say to put your pencils?”*
- *“Amanda, what do you do after you put your pencils away?”*
- *“Camila, which workbook goes in your desk?”*