

# Build Children's Critical Thinking Skills with the E's and P's

Promoting children's critical thinking skills is an important part of preparing them for language and literacy success.

You can encourage children to develop critical thinking during the everyday conversations and activities you already do with them. All you need to do is remember the E's and P's!

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## The E's and P's

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### Explain

Talk to children about why things happen (for example, why a character in a book did a particular thing) and encourage them to draw on their existing knowledge and reasoning skills to come up with explanations, as well as the reasons for their conclusions.

### Predict

Make comments and ask questions that encourage children to make realistic predictions about what will happen next. Encourage them to brainstorm different possibilities and describe the reasons behind their predictions.

### Problem-solve

Draw children's attention to small problems as they arise throughout the day, and encourage them to think of solutions. Help them describe the problem and draw on their knowledge and experiences to decide on the best solution.

### Evaluate

Encourage children to offer opinions about their own preferences and about the things they see or experience. Engage them in conversations to explore how and why they have reached their opinions.

### Project

Encourage children to put themselves into the minds of others with questions like, "How do you think he feels?", "What do you think she's thinking right now?" or "Why do you think he wants to do that?" Projecting is critical for building story understanding.

# Why is critical thinking so important for language and literacy?

## Language

Language and critical thinking grow together and nurture each other's development. As children think critically, their language skills expand because they're encouraged to develop and use more complex language with words like "because", phrases with "if" and "then" and different verb tenses. And as children's language development progresses, their ability to think critically grows as well.

## Literacy

To truly understand the meaning of a book, children must be able to do more than recognize and sound out letters and words. They must also "read between the lines" to figure things out that are not actually stated in the book. To do this, they must use critical thinking skills like problem-solving, predicting and projecting. Encouraging this kind of thinking early in children's lives prepares them for understanding the books they'll read on their own later.

## When and how does critical thinking develop?

Research shows that children begin to think critically at a very young age. These skills develop during the natural, back and forth conversations children have with the important adults in their lives.

Whether you're reading a book or taking a walk in the park, any time is a good time to build critical thinking.

## More tips for building critical thinking

Hanen's 2016 Preschool Language and Literacy Calendar includes a special focus on building the E's and P's of critical thinking. The calendar offers 16 months of fun and simple tips, beginning in September 2015.



For more tips and information on critical thinking, visit [www.hanen.org/critical-thinking](http://www.hanen.org/critical-thinking)